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POLLYANNA'S (TRADE MARK) DEBT OF HONOR

by HARRIET LUMMIS SMITH

Pollyanna's
(Trade Mark)
ebt of Honor

HARRIET LUMMIS SMITH

Author of

YANNA (Trade Mark) OF THE
ORANGE BLOSSOMS, Etc.

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New York Evening Post.

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To- Dora with love.
From Minnie
and Thalia

Xmas 1931

POLLYANNA'S
DEBT OF HONOR

Stories by

HARRIET LUMMIS SMITH

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By HARRIET LUMMIS SMITH

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POLLYANNA'S DEBT OF HONOR

CHAPTER 1

THE HOUSE ACROSS THE STREET

THE house across the street from Pollyanna's home had always reminded her of an old-fashioned grandmother, surrounded by flappers. The Whiting house, as it was called, had been built as a country residence long before the suburb was thought of, and one knew at a glance it would be short on bath-rooms and long on closets. It had stood empty for years, while an estate was being settled with rather more than the proverbial delay of the law. Its hedges had grown tall, and the small evergreens dotting the lawn, the roses and lilac and wisteria had improved the period of neglect to follow their own fantastic whims.

Indications that the old house was again to be

occupied sent an anticipatory thrill the length of Elsinore Terrace. Mrs. Warner, Pollyanna's next-door neighbor, declared the neglected hedge had been an eye-sore for years, and Mrs. Hunt, another neighbor, confessed that she always thought of an empty house as a lurking-place for tramps. Pollyanna herself was pleased chiefly because the Whiting house impressed her as possessing all the qualifications for a delightful home, and it seemed a pity that no one should be having the fun of it.

Immediately following the settlement of the estate, the property changed hands, and the new owners at once set about giving the place a thorough overhauling. The repairs began with the roof and ended only at the cellar. Plasterers, carpenters, plumbers, paper-hangers, and painters came and went in quick succession. Then the grounds were taken in hand, the hedges and shrubbery were trimmed, the weed-grown gardens spaded, the grass cut, and turf replaced where necessary. And then Elsinore Terrace waited expectantly for the new neighbors to move in.

But the unwonted promptness of the relays of workers had not been due, apparently, to the impatience of the newcomers to take possession. Days merged imperceptibly into weeks, and the old house, after its brief period of tip-toe alertness, lapsed into

its old-time inertia. Again the grass grew tall, and the hedge thrust out tentative shoots, as if to satisfy itself that the late reform measures were only a passing flurry.

"Oh, look!" Judy gazing from an upper window, late one spring afternoon, explosively challenged her mother's attention. "The made-over house is all on fire."

Pollyanna should have known better than to be startled. Judy's imagination was always running away with her, and Jimmy predicted for her a successful career as a writer of blood-curdling fiction. But unwarned by past experience, Pollyanna crossed the room in haste, to be reassured at the first glance.

"Oh, that's not a fire, dear. That's the light of the sunset reflected in the windows. See how bright the sky is."

Judy gave her attention to the glowing western horizon. "I guess Heaven's on fire," she hazarded. "Mother, wouldn't it be just our luck if it all went and got burned up 'fore we got there?" And then, without waiting comment on the suggested tragedy, she was off at another tangent. "When are the little girls coming?"

"What little girls, dear?"

"Why, the ones that are going to live in the made-over house."

"Are some little girls to live there? I hadn't heard." Pollyanna wondered whether a bit of neighborhood gossip, passing her by, had reached Judy's ears, or if the wish were merely father to the thought. Knowing her offspring as she did, she was not surprised to find the latter alternative correct.

"Well, I'm pretty sure there'll be little girls, mother," reasoned Judy with an air of condescending to an undeveloped intellect. "'Cause God wouldn't send any more little boys to this street. There's too many a'ready."

"Oh, I don't know. I think it is hard to have too many nice boys."

"When I'm a lady," declared Judy impressively, "I'm going to have lots of little girls, an' lots of dogs like Jiggs, an' lots of kitties like Sin, an' not a single boy, not even a teenty-weenty baby." Her mind relieved by this ultimatum, she went back to her original query. "Why don't those little girls hurry up 'n come, mother?"

"I don't know that any little girls are coming."

"Will they be just boys?"

"There may not be any children in the family."

Judy pondered this startling suggestion. "Well, I guess they'll have to get some children pretty quick," she said at length. "Aunt Sadie didn't have

any baby at first and now she's got Jamie, and Aunt Anne didn't have any little boy so she 'dopted Philip. Would you let those folks 'dopt Junior, mother?"

"I should think not."

Judy sighed. "If he lived over there and I lived over here, we could wave to each other every day an' it would be lots of fun." And then, her manner suggesting her realization that this is a disappointing world, she flattened her nose against the pane, and gave herself up to the contemplation of nature.

As the days went on, Judy ceased to talk of her prospective neighbors, and the adults along the Terrace gradually accepted the theory that the renovated house would not be occupied before fall. Then all at once, there was a flurry of preparation, this time plainly preliminary to immediate occupancy. The windows were washed and left open to air the rooms so long empty. The grass was cut again. And one morning as Pollyanna went to the door to see the children off to school, she found the moving-vans before the house.

"Do I have to go to school today, mother?" inquired Judy, who, although broken-hearted whenever she was kept home, considered it good enough form to affect dissatisfaction with the processes of education.

"I think you'd better go."

"If she don't she'll grow into a—a—ignominious, won't she, mother?" demanded Junior, whose fondness for new words frequently got him into trouble.

"You mean ignoramus, don't you, dear? Yes, it's a dreadful thing for children not to go to school."

"I'm not a nigger-amus." Judy's resentment included impartially her mother and her brother. "I'm a little white girl. Besides, that's a bad word."

"Ho!" scoffed Junior, "It don't mean what you think. It means you don't know how to read and spell."

"I do too. C—a—t, cat."

Pollyanna checked her son's derisive mirth. "You know Judy isn't nearly as old as you are. I think she has done pretty well for such a little girl. Now run along, children. And, Junior, remember to stop at every crossing and look both ways before you take Judy over."

She watched them off, a shadow of apprehension darkening her eyes. A modern mother needed to be something of a Spartan, Pollyanna reflected, since every morning she must send her children out into actual danger. The Twentieth Century, with all its boasted progress, had not made the streets safe for little children.

It was a relief to turn her attention to the moving vans, one of which was already beginning to disgorge its contents. It was a busy morning for Pollyanna, but, in spite of the pressure of work, she stopped rather frequently to watch operations from the window. If a very lively interest in all that concerned her fellow beings was a weakness, Pollyanna owned to it.

Jimmy came home to dinner prepared to be enlightened. "Well, I suppose you've found out everything about our new neighbors, except possibly the amount of their income tax."

"I haven't really learned a thing, Jimmy. There were two maids working there all day, and a man in a chauffeur's uniform, but I didn't see anyone else."

"Mother thinks there aren't any little girls going to live there," Judy sighed.

"Dear me! Quite an oversight."

"Nor any boys, either," put in Junior.

"Worse and worse."

"I don't know, of course," said Pollyanna. "But I didn't see any furniture that suggested children. There must be quite a family, though, there was so much stuff."

"I thought it worked just the other way," suggested Jimmy. "The larger the house, the smaller

the family." He meant it as a joke, but a few days later Pollyanna had information which indicated that his jest had hit the mark.

"Jimmy, you were right about our new neighbors. It seems that there are only two in the family, a father and daughter. He passed the house this morning on his way to the train. He's very nice looking, about as old as Uncle John, I should say, though his hair is whiter."

"Is the daughter grown?"

"Yes. I haven't seen her at close range, but she looks grown up. I think I'll call early next week. The house is in as perfect order as if they'd been living there a year."

That Pollyanna did not carry out her neighborly intention was due to Mrs. McGill. She had dropped in one morning with her week's mending, enormously increased since Philip had become a member of the family, and as the two women chatted over their darning, Pollyanna suggested, "Don't you want to go with me to call on our new neighbor?"

"You don't mean that Chalmers girl?"

"Why, yes."

Mrs. McGill laid down her darning. "Then you haven't heard?"

"Heard what?"

"That she doesn't want any callers. That she's an invalid."

"Invalid!"

Pollyanna echoed the word with such obvious incredulity that her neighbor laughed.

"I don't know anything about it," she said. "Possibly, Miss Chalmers is not impressed with the social advantages of this suburb, and thinks invalidism is the best protection against unwelcome advances."

"What made you think she was an invalid?"

"Mrs. Redding and Mrs. Hamilton called there Wednesday. And the maid told them that Miss Chalmers asked to be excused. She said she was an invalid and didn't see anybody."

"The poor thing!" cried Pollyanna, who could imagine no worse fate than to be shut away from friends, potential or otherwise. "But she's so young that probably she'll get over it."

"You've seen her, then?"

"Oh, yes, she goes out in the car every morning."

"In the car? Does she seem very weak?"

"No, indeed," exclaimed Pollyanna with an emphasis which she regretted as she saw its effect upon Mrs. McGill.

"She doesn't! Pollyanna, wouldn't it be a joke

if she just made up that story to keep from being annoyed by her neighbors?"

From Pollyanna's standpoint, this was unthinkable. She said quickly, "Of course I've never seen her nearer than across the street. She may look very delicate, for all I know."

Mrs. McGill picked up her darning. "Well, whether her invalidism is real or an excuse," she said, "it's evident that the Chalmers family won't be a social asset on Elsinore Terrace."

When Pollyanna next caught a glimpse of her new neighbor, she regarded her with almost painful solicitude. The car stood before the house, the chauffeur at the door. The young woman came briskly down the walk, her movements suggesting intense vitality, rather than physical delicacy.

She stopped on the further side of the hedge. "Martin." Her voice was clear and incisive. It had no suggestion of the languors of invalidism.

"Yes, Miss Lorraine."

"Will you see that some water is put in the bird-bath this afternoon? It has been dry for so many days that the poor things will appreciate it."

"I'll see to it, Miss Lorraine."

She crossed the sidewalk and entered the car. She wore a dark blue suit and a black hat that

dipped down over the left cheek. But the right cheek showed pink as the petals of a rose.

Pollyanna looked after the car as it rolled away, and shook her head.

"Miss Lorraine Chalmers, you don't look like an invalid, you don't talk like an invalid, and you don't walk like one. So if you *are* sick, you'll have to show me. Whether you want callers or not, I'm going to get acquainted with you and find out for myself what ails you."

Under the circumstances the resolution was distinctly reckless. Pollyanna would have been amazed had she known how speedily it was to be put into effect.

CHAPTER II

AN INTRODUCTION

JUNIOR and Judy were demanding special costumes for the closing exercises of the school year. Junior was to be dressed as an Indian boy, a happy choice from Pollyanna's standpoint, since he already possessed a complete Indian outfit, which Aunt Ruth had picked up on one of her trips west. Judy was to appear as Little Bo-Peep, and on learning what she was to wear, Pollyana did not wonder that she had lost her sheep. Any self-respecting flock was bound to bolt, by way of protest.

As Pollyanna studied the sketch in which Judy's teacher had embodied her ideas of a suitable costume for a shepherdess, she recalled a discarded frock of her own, not really worth making over, and not just the thing for her periodic donation to the Salvation Army. It was a sheer, be-flowered material, made with little ruffles, and Pollyanna who had often asked herself why she was saving it, discovered the answer in Bo-Peep's inappropriate garb.

Pollyanna had brought her sewing out on the porch, where industry would be no bar to the full enjoyment of the freshness of the June morning. Over in the corner little Ruth was endeavoring to array her largest doll in garments intended for one less than half its size. Ruth was nearly three years old, and the family sunbeam. Though a less beautiful child than Judy, the radiant cheerfulness of her plump little face made an irresistible appeal. However often Judy and Junior clashed, there was one subject on which they were in accord, and that was the absolute perfection of their small sister. Sadie was fond of telling how Junior, on his introduction to little Jamie, looked him over appraisingly and then remarked, "Isn't it funny how beside Ruth all the other babies look like plain mud?"

Pollyanna stood for a moment watching the absorption of the youngest of her brood in her impossible task. She had intended asking Nancy to keep an eye on Ruth while she went upstairs, but Nancy was ironing and in view of the little girl's engrossed interest in her play, the precaution seemed unnecessary. Pollyanna went indoors, closing the door behind her very softly, and nothing in Ruth's demeanor betrayed the knowledge that she was temporarily abandoned.

It took Pollyanna longer than she anticipated to

find the material she wanted. She would have said that she knew not only the trunk that contained it, but the particular corner of a particular tray where it was folded away. It was not till she had freed herself from the obsession of certainty, and started out as if she had no knowledge of the whereabouts of the elusive garment, that she came across it in the last of the array of trunks. And then, for no reason that she could offer when she thought of it later, instead of going downstairs at once, she stepped into the room at the front of the house, and looked across the street.

The time she stood there was no longer than one could hold one's breath, yet it seemed to Pollyanna that those brief seconds stole her youth from her and left her a tremulous old woman. She had come to the window just in time to see one of those tense dramas that, enacted before one's eyes, seem all confusion, but later, in the long years when they haunt one's dreams, repeat themselves without the omission of the least detail. The rush of a delivery truck along the street, the forward leap of a girl in blue, her stumbling recoil, her fall backward, clutching to her heart something she had snatched from under those ponderous wheels, were to be rehearsed in Pollyanna's brain through many a feverish night in the years to come.

All these things she saw, but her straining eyes failed to assure her whether the little white-clad figure, with its mop of yellow hair, moved slightly or lay quiescent under the encircling arm. As Pollyanna ran down the two flights of stairs, she seemed to herself to be shrieking, but in the kitchen Nancy's iron slid placidly over the shining damask, and Nancy hummed a little tuneless song. The shrieks that were tearing at Pollyanna's throat, escaped her lips as moans too faint to reach Nancy's ears. But Jiggs, more alert than human kind, met her on the first landing, and followed at her heels, his doggish heart instinctively aware of tragedy.

There was a mist before Pollyanna's eyes as she crossed the street. Her heart was leaping like some caged and terrified creature, flinging itself against confining bars. She saw vaguely that Lorraine Chalmers had regained her feet, but the little figure in her arms was only a blur of white against the blue background. Pollyanna flung out her arms with an anguished wail.

Her cry was answered by another. The sweetest little voice in the world, rendered plaintive by a sense of grievance, lamented, "Baby's pitty dwess aw dirty. Aw dirty! Baby's a bad, bad girl."

It was perhaps as well for Pollyanna that the chasm between heart-rending terror and relief

should have been bridged by unconsciousness. The passage from one mood to the other would necessarily have been too rapid for safety. The best way out was to obliterate the tumultuous emotions of the past few minutes, and make a fresh start. Pollyanna crumpled where she stood and the healing waters of oblivion rushed over her.

It seemed to Pollyanna that hours had elapsed, though as a matter of fact, it was no more than a minute or two, when she was aware of a brisk tongue applied to her cheek. A shocked voice was remonstrating without effect, and another voice, high-pitched and sweet was murmuring, "Aw dirty. Baby's a bad girl." Pollyanna opened her eyes, her mood curiously apathetic, and Jiggs applauded his methods by a little exultant bark.

Lorraine Chalmers was kneeling beside her, Pollyanna saw, and with languid approval she noticed the beauty of the frightened face, looking down upon her. At her side, Ruth held up her white frock, gazing disapprovingly at a spot that marred its freshness. Pollyanna regarded the picture with detached interest.

"You're this little girl's mother, I suppose," Miss Chalmers said, speaking rather breathlessly. "I'm so sorry you had such a terrible shock, for she isn't hurt a bit."

Remembrance stabbed Pollyanna's unnatural calm. She lifted herself to a sitting posture. "You saved her life," she cried, and with the words, the tears streamed down her cheeks. Jiggs, his complacency rudely jarred by this exhibition, whined protestingly, and pressed close to her.

"Oh, please don't cry," pleaded Miss Chalmers. "Everything's all right, you see. Are you able to walk, do you think? If you could get into the yard, there's a chair right in the shade where you could be comfortable till you're better. If you want to try it, I'll call one of the maids and we'll both help you."

But Pollyanna's tears had served as a safety valve, and she was beginning to pull herself together. "Oh, I think I can walk without any help," she said. "I'm almost all right again." She got to her feet with difficulty in spite of her boast, and found something vaguely comforting in Miss Chalmer's firm hand on her arm. But once on her feet, the worst was over, and she walked quite steadily to a rustic chair that stood on the lawn, in the circle of shade cast by a handsome horse-chestnut.

By this time Pollyanna's mood was highly apologetic. "Oh, I'm so ashamed of myself," she sighed. "To think I should be the one to faint instead of you."

Miss Chalmers' expression changed. She looked rather as if she would have liked to smile, had she not forgotten how. "But why not?" she asked.

"Well, I'm always perfectly well. And you—Oh, dear, I hope this hasn't been too much for you."

If it was the ghost of a smile she had surprised on Miss Chalmers' lips, it had vanished, after the conventional habit of ghosts, leaving no trace. "Why should it be too much for me?" Miss Chalmers asked, though something in her manner suggested indifference to the answer.

"Well, I understand that you're not very strong, and I'm sure the saving of a baby's life and then having the foolish mother faint on your hands, would be a strenuous program for anybody."

"If you heard I wasn't strong, you were misinformed. I'm one of those tragically robust people who outlive all their friends, all their hopes, and all their happiness."

Her voice was not pleasant any longer. It had turned hard and rasping. But Pollyanna was not in a mood to be rebuffed. Impulsively she caught the hand nearest hers, and held it in both her own.

"You were a stranger just this morning," she said. "And now I owe you such a debt that I can't live long enough to pay it off." Quite forgetting Miss Chalmers' aversion to society, she went on

eagerly, "I hope you'll let me bring my husband over to see you. He won't be satisfied till he's thanked you for us both."

"But I've been thanked too much as it is. What I did was nothing. And I—well, the fact is that I very seldom meet strangers."

Pollyanna's fingers seemed to loosen their hold of the girl's hand without waiting for orders. Her color had been slow in coming back, but now it rushed flaming to her cheeks. The rebuff was as unmistakable as a slap in the face. This young woman who had just rejected any claim to sympathy on the score of invalidism, did not care to meet strangers. Pollyanna was bewildered, humiliated, hurt.

"I'm so sorry," she was beginning, and then she stopped, a shock of emotion catching her by the throat. For very deliberately Miss Chalmers had turned and now stood with her profile toward her. Pollyanna's abrupt halt was due to the discovery that the cheek turned in her direction was disfigured by an unsightly scar. There was a depression, almost as deep as if caused by a bullet, and from this centre, thin, bluish lines radiated in all directions, the effect irresistibly suggestive of a spider's web. Pollyanna stared, realized that the girl had deliberately invited inspection of her dis-

figurement, and then jerkily finished her sentence—"that you feel that way."

Miss Chalmers faced about, the blue eyes darkened by pain. For a moment her lips parted as if to speak, but she conquered the impulse and closed them in a thin white line. But when Pollyanna struggled to her feet, she spoke quickly enough. "Oh, you mustn't try to walk yet, you must not think of it."

"But I feel quite myself again. I'm really very strong. This is only the second time in my life that I've fainted," Pollyanna hesitated, then rallied her determination and went on. "I hope you'll let me see you again before long. I haven't begun to say what's in my heart."

Miss Chalmers looked away. Pollyanna was convinced that she was on the point of refusing the request, and a little impulsive, "Oh, please!" escaped her. The girl glanced at her in surprise, and then for a second time that morning, her lips twisted in a faint smile. "I'm not always agreeable company," she said.

"If you didn't feel like seeing me when I came, I could come again."

"I don't expect ever to feel like seeing people. I moved from a town where everyone knew me, just to get away from them all, the sympathetic as well

as the curious. Crusoe's island would be the ideal spot, but unluckily father has to be near his business. I thought it would be the easiest thing in the world to keep from making any new acquaintances." She looked at Pollyanna with a wry smile. "You see I didn't count on your living just across the street."

"Nor on your starting out by saving my baby's life."

"I see you're determined to exaggerate that little episode. Well, it would be nice to feel that one had done something to justify one's having been born. But the fact is I acted without even stopping to think, so there was nothing heroic about it."

"I can't admit that. I saw the whole thing from the window, and I'm sure you risked your life to save my little girl. I shall never forgive myself for taking the risk I did, and I shall never forget what I owe you."

Her eyes brimmed over again and she struggled to mop up the flood, murmuring an apology for her unwonted emotion. And she guessed shrewdly that it was with a view to distracting her thoughts, that Miss Chalmers said abruptly, "Oh, by the way, I don't know your name."

"I'm Mrs. Pendleton, and I have the advantage of you, for I've known your name for some time. This

little girl is Ruth Pendleton, and she has a brother and a sister who go to school."

"You must be a busy woman."

"Everybody is busy nowadays. That's no distinction. But sometimes I ask myself if ever any other woman was as fortunate as I. Goodbye, Miss Chalmers. We've had an unusual introduction, and I hope it means that we're going to be friends."

Holding tightly to Ruth's hand, Pollyanna crossed the street, while Miss Chalmers stood looking after her. And presently her hand went up to her disfigured cheek, as if the old hurt were throbbing.

CHAPTER III

AN ALLIANCE

JIMMY was not enthusiastic over Pollyanna's projected campaign in behalf of Lorraine Chalmers. Grateful as he felt for her rescue of his idolized little daughter, he was inclined to respect her preference for solitude.

"As long as she doesn't care to meet people, I can't see that you're justified in forcing yourself upon her. It isn't as if you were old friends. You're a stranger, and I don't feel that you have any excuse for disregarding her wishes."

"But, Jimmy, you must admit that she's awfully morbid."

"Even if she is, that's her business."

"She's so pretty I suppose it's harder for her to be reconciled to a disfigurement than it would be for a person like me, for instance."

"Talk about angling for compliments! But it's no use. I'm not going to contradict you, whatever you say."

"Jimmy, don't be ridiculous. I mean that a woman just passably good-looking could stand such a thing better than one who is used to admiration."

"Something you're quite unaccustomed to, of course. Poor thing!" Jimmy's irony, if not at all subtle, was so flattering that Pollanna felt absurdly elated, and disinclined to envy any of the world's beauties from Helen of Troy down.

"Oh, well, if you won't be sensible," she said, "we'll just drop that part of the discussion. Anyway it hasn't anything to do with my plans. It seems to me that a girl who lets herself get into such a morbid state is likely to become unbalanced. I feel I owe Miss Chalmers more than I can possibly pay, but if I can help her into a more normal mood, I shall have made a beginning."

"Far be it from me to stand in your way. It's only that I don't like the idea of your butting in where you're not wanted."

"Of course I couldn't keep it up indefinitely. But there's a possibility, you know, that she might learn to like me."

"You always were an optimist," said Jimmy. But as he kissed her, she knew that his opposition to her philanthropic plan had dwindled below the proportions of an obstacle.

Procrastination was foreign to Pollyanna's tem-

perament. Indeed Jimmy frequently reminded her that in all probability another day was coming, so that it was not necessary for her to crowd into twenty-four hours all that she wished to accomplish in life. And now that gratitude joined forces with her habitual impatience of delay, it was unlikely that her call on Miss Chalmers would have been long postponed, even if Mr. Lindsay had not been coming out to dinner.

Franklin Lindsay was one of Jimmy's friends who had been west for over a year. Pollyanna had always remembered him gratefully, because he had presented Jiggs to the family, and she was impatient to have him see for himself the phenomenal development of that interesting animal. In honor of Mr. Lindsay's coming, Pollyanna made some macaroons to serve with the ice cream, and had such unusual success with the tricky confections that when she caught sight of Lorraine Chalmers' yellow head, showing above the tall privet hedge, she at once resolved to make them the opening wedge of her campaign. Acting on the impulse of the moment, she piled a plate with the tempting sweetmeats and ran across the street.

Miss Chalmers sat reading in the chair Pollyanna herself had occupied two days before. She closed her book and greeted her caller courteously, though

with a marked absence of enthusiasm. But Pollyanna was determined not to take to heart any lack of cordiality, till she was thoroughly convinced of her inability to become a welcome visitor.

"I do hope you like macaroons," was her off-hand beginning. "I had extra good luck with some this morning and I brought you a sample."

Miss Chalmers' face showed a surprise untempered by pleasure, and Pollyanna realized, as she had done on previous occasions, that her residence in several of the largest cities of the country, had not eradicated her small-town training. She could never remember that what was mere neighborliness in Beldingsville, Vermont, might seem a liberty in New York or Boston. Her expression of consternation did not escape Miss Chalmers' notice, and perhaps this was responsible for the rather belated acknowledgement that Pollyanna was very kind.

"I hope you really think so," Pollyanna returned ruefully. "You see I was brought up in a little town, and I always forget how long it takes city people to get acquainted."

Miss Chalmers looked rather taken aback by this frankness. "Why, of course you're very kind," she said, "I'm sure no one needs to know you long to find that out." She removed the napkin from the

plate Pollyanna had handed her, and made an effort to appear delighted. "How nice they look! Did you really make them yourself?"

"I'm always trying them," explained Pollyanna, encouraged by this response. "They're the most fascinating things, because there's never any telling how they'll turn out. I do exactly the same thing every time, and one day they'll be as flat as a pancake, and the next, nice and puffy like these. I'm always awfully excited. It's something like gambling, I suppose. Of course we can dispose of them at our house whatever they're like. The children aren't at all particular."

"Won't you sit down?" Miss Chalmers looked politely toward a rustic bench placed at some distance, and Pollyanna reflected that the arrangement of the lawn furniture seemed designed to discourage sociability.

"No, thank you," she said blithely, "I must hurry home. Mr. Pendleton may be out a little early as he is bringing a friend, Mr. Lindsay, with him."

"Mr.——" But Miss Chalmers got no further in her sentence. An unconsidered movement upset the macaroons into her lap, and she sat staring down on them, her manner so shocked and startled that Pollyanna wondered how it would seem to go

through life making a tragedy of every slight mischance.

She said quietly, "I'm sure the macaroons won't hurt your dress and your dress won't hurt them. Lucky they didn't spill on the grass, isn't it?" And Miss Chalmers, with the effect of coming out of a trance, acknowledged that it was very lucky indeed, and began mechanically to put the macaroons back on the plate. As Pollyanna recrossed the street, she found herself giving consideration to Jimmy's point of view. Miss Chalmers was certainly a difficult person to cultivate. Was it all due to morbid sensitiveness, resulting from her disfigurement, or was she one of the people who prefer to make all the advances toward acquaintance?

A number of things prevented a further consideration of the problem. Junior and Judy, returning from school, made a reluctant toilet under their mother's supervision. The children were to take their evening meal in the nursery, and Pollyanna took charge of that, leaving Nancy free to devote her energies to the dinner. As the hour for Jimmy's train drew near, Pollyanna discarded her blue gingham and donned the silk frock that was Jimmy's favorite; and she was hardly inside it when she heard masculine voices in the hall below.

She did not think of Miss Chalmers again till

they were eating their desert, and then Mr. Lindsay's extravagant appreciation of the macaroons, in contrast with her neighbor's lukewarm enthusiasm, recalled her perplexity.

"I took some of the macaroons to Miss Chalmers," she informed Jimmy across the table.

"I hope she fell on your neck."

"Not exactly. It's a very sad case," Pollyanna explained, turning to her guest. "A new neighbor of ours has a morbid dislike to seeing people and I think it is because——"

Pollyanna lost the thread of her narrative and stopped short. Mr. Lindsay was staring at her with an intensity she could not credit to her story, especially as it had hardly begun. But it was soon evident that she was mistaken, for as she broke off, and waited for him to explain his seeming excitement, he said, "Because? Go on, please."

"Well, she would be a beautiful girl if it wasn't for a bad scar on the left cheek. I have an idea she's sensitive about it, and that's why she doesn't care to meet people. She——"

"Are you speaking of Lorraine Chalmers?"

"Why, yes, indeed. Her name is Lorraine. Do you know her?" cried Pollyanna. Later she regretted having introduced the subject just when she did, for her ice cream, ordered not from the drug

store, as was the case with ice cream for purely family dinners, but from the most expensive confectioner in the vicinity, was almost entirely wasted. Mr. Lindsay had lost all interest in his food. In fact, as he sat back in his chair, it was evident that he was struggling for sufficient self-control to enable him to reply.

"Yes, I know her," he said at length in a stifled voice. "In fact we—we were lovers once. And I haven't seen her for almost three years."

It was impossible to go on eating ice cream after that. Pollyanna gulped down a mouthful or two, feeling very much as if she were swallowing marbles, and then gave up the attempt. Of course it was inevitable that, having said so much, Mr. Lindsay should say more. Later they sat on the porch in the gathering dusk, and two listened breathlessly, while the third, forgetful of his habitual reticence, opened up his heart.

"You were right about that scar," he said, addressing Pollyanna. "It's a little thing to ruin two lives, isn't it, but that's what it has done, and I'm responsible."

His voice was heart-breaking. Instinctively Pollyanna's hand nestled into Jimmy's, and he held it tightly.

"Three years ago I thought I was the luckiest

chap alive. We were practically engaged, but it was so perfect, as it was, that I'd let things drift along. We were both young, you see, and I was sure she understood all I hadn't said. I cursed myself afterward, I can tell you, that I hadn't settled the question."

Pollyanna's sense of justice led her to protest. "I'm sure it's a beautiful, happy time when everything's understood and nothing is said."

"That's what I thought. And then one night, when I was driving her home from a friend's where we spent the evening, we had an accident. In a sense it was the other fellow's fault. I had the right of way. But if I hadn't been too absorbed with Lorraine, I might have avoided the collision. Talk about the irony of fate. I wasn't injured except for a sprained wrist. And she—she smashed into the wind-shield. Her left cheek was frightfully cut."

The young man stopped in his story, and the intake of his breath was like a sob. Pollyanna found her handkerchief and pressed it to her wet eyes. And then Jimmy said huskily, "Don't tell us any more, old chap, if you'd rather not."

"As long as I've started, I'd rather get it off my chest. She was in the hospital several weeks, and, though I went every day, I didn't see her often. The

head nurse would tell me how nervous she was, and that I'd better come again next week. And when she came home, I'd been held at arm's length so long that I swore I'd make an end of it. And the very first day I asked her to marry me."

Pollyanna's gasp broke in on his recital and he gave her a sharp glance. "I see you think I made a mistake."

"It wasn't exactly tactful, I'm afraid."

"Evidently not. She—she—pretended to think I was acting from a sense of duty, that, since I'd spoiled her other chances by my carelessness, I felt in honor bound to marry her. It sounds like wanton cruelty, but it wasn't that. She had grown too morbid to take a rational view of anything that concerned herself. After we'd had two or three pretty trying interviews, she refused to see me again, and then for a while I wrote her every day. I gave that up when she began sending the letters back unopened." He looked at Pollyanna with hot, miserable eyes. "I heard that they had moved recently, but, till you spoke her name tonight, I had no idea where I could find them."

A little silence followed. The reticence of the average American where his deeper feelings are concerned, rendered this exposure of naked emotion fairly embarassing. Lindsay himself, seemed

to realize this after a moment, for the dim light was enough to reveal his vivid flush.

"I know I ought to apologize to you people," he muttered. "It's not often I slop over this way, but I was taken by surprise. I beg your pardon, I'm sorry."

Pollyanna protested indignantly. "Apologize! Why, I'm thankful to know this, for now I won't let myself get discouraged, no matter what she does. If she could treat you that way, naturally she'd try to keep a stranger at arm's length. But she won't keep me there, I promise you."

The young man looked surprised at this ardent championship, and Pollyanna hastened to explain. "It isn't only that I want to help you, though of course I do, but I have a debt to pay. I didn't tell you at dinner for it upsets me whenever I speak of it, but Miss Chalmers pulled my baby out of the way of a truck two days ago. That was our introduction, and I made up my mind then and there that I was going to help her conquer this morbidness."

Lindsay regarded his hostess admiringly. "If anybody on earth can do it, you can," he declared with gratifying conviction.

"I was a little discouraged this afternoon, she seemed so much more—well, distant than she did the other day. But if she won't see you when she loves you, I can't expect she'll be glad to see *me*."

Young Lindsay blushed again. "I suppose it sounds tremendously nervy," he apologized, "for me to assume that a girl like Lorraine is in love with me, when she's never said so. And of course I haven't seen her for nearly three years. But she was in love with me once, I'll stake my life on that."

"And now she's more in love with you than ever," Pollyanna assured him, "because she hasn't very much to do except think about you."

Out of Lindsay's contending emotions, amusement was the temporary victor. "I'm glad you think that uninterrupted meditation on my charms would have just that effect."

"Of course it would," flashed Pollyanna, with such conviction that Jimmy at once counterfeited intense jealousy. Refusing to encourage his folly by so much as noticing it, Pollyanna continued. "It's wonderful how it helps to have an ally. I'm certain now that we're going to win out. It's bad enough for her to spoil her own life, but to spoil yours, too, can't be allowed. We simply must make her see reason."

There was something contagious in Pollyanna's optimistic certainty. Lindsay looked at her in bewildered gratitude, as the hope that he had thought dead proved its vitality by hurting him intolerably.

"It's quite the thing nowadays," remarked Jimmy, "to warn against entangling alliances, but you two have got me to the point of believing you're invincible. And, now that I think you're going to win, I want you to count me in. Wait till I open some ginger ale—what did we have for dinner that was extra salt, Pollyanna?—and we'll drink to the success of our plot."

When Jimmy brought back the tray, with the three brimming glasses, they clinked them like real conspirators, and drank the toast standing.

CHAPTER IV

KIDNAPPERS

In planning her campaign in behalf of Lorraine Chalmers, Pollyanna counted on the children. Her process of reasoning was simple. Children were practically irresistible, and three youngsters named Pendleton doubly so. If once Miss Chalmers realized their fascinations, she would wish to see much of them, and that would necessitate seeing a good deal of their mother. And then, too, Pollyanna was strongly convinced that friendliness like hers, if given half a chance, was bound to win.

There was no flaw in her reasoning, as far as she could see; but Pollyanna had not lived to be the mother of three without discovering that the human race is for the most part illogical. For all her optimism, she was unable to report anything especially encouraging on those rather frequent occasions when she talked things over with Franklin Lindsay. By this time Miss Chalmers had made the acquaintance of all Pollyanna's brood. She pronounced Junior an exceptionally bright little fellow and

thought Judy one of the most beautiful children she had ever seen. Little Ruth, Pollyanna guessed, was the favorite, perhaps because she was young enough to accept unquestioningly that which might awaken the curiosity of older children. But even where Ruth was concerned, though Miss Chalmers laughed at the small girl's speeches, patted the golden curls caressingly, and bent her unscarred cheek for parting kisses, she had an air of meeting the obvious requirements of courtesy. Pollyanna looked vainly for signs of something more compelling.

Under ordinary circumstances Pollyanna would have given up and turned her attention to more responsive neighbors. But young Lindsay's pathetic confidence in the alliance they had formed, coupled with her own sense of obligation, kept her resolution taut. Since there was nothing new to tell, she seldom mentioned Miss Chalmers to Jimmy, but hardly a day passed without her finding some way to bring herself to the attention of her difficult neighbor.

It was in accord with her established program that one busy Saturday she resolved to send Junior to Miss Chalmers with a copy of James Carew's latest novel, an affectionate inscription scrawled on the fly leaf in the author's all but illegible hand. Ordinarily Pollyanna would not have loaned the

book before reading it herself, but Franklin Lindsay was coming out for the week-end and she would be unable to give it any attention for several days. She was hopeful that Miss Chalmers would find it interesting for more reasons than one. She had told her something of her long friendship for the crippled boy who had won distinction despite his handicap, and she flattered herself that her narrative had really made an impression. Miss Chalmers had been sufficiently interested to ask questions, quite a number of them.

"And I'm not going to give her a chance to forget it, either," Pollyanna promised herself. "James' legs are a million times harder to get over than her scar, and she must have the sense to know it. After what he has done, she ought to be ashamed to make a mere disfigurement an excuse for spoiling everybody's life."

She summoned Junior from the back yard and gave him his directions. "I think you'll find Miss Chalmers in the garden now. She's generally there at this time. You must walk up to her very politely and take off your cap——"

"If I don't wear my cap, I won't have to take it off, will I, mother?"

"No. Just say, 'Good afternoon, Miss Chalmers.' And then tell her that mother has sent over the book

she spoke of the other day. Then come right home, unless Miss Chalmers wants you to stay."

"How can I tell if she wants me to stay?" demanded Junior, voicing a perplexity shared by older representatives of his sex.

"Well, if she asks you questions as if she wanted to talk, you may stay for a little while." Pollyanna, always hopeful of some beneficent miracle, thought it possible that if Miss Chalmers had the boy to herself, she might be less constrained than when the mother was present. With this thought in mind, she added, "When you come back, find mother and tell her just what Miss Chalmers said."

"Can I go on my bicycle, mother?"

Pollyanna gave a laughing assent. The bicycle was a recent gift from Uncle John, and, from Pollyanna's standpoint, a most unwelcome one. Junior, who had learned to ride in an afternoon, complained bitterly that there was no use having a wheel, if he could never ride it outside the back yard. From the standpoint of an adult, it was absurd to take a bicycle for crossing the street, but Pollyanna had long before realized the unfairness of imposing such standards of children.

Junior brought out his wheel, and, to make the trip as long as possible, rode down to the end of the block, crossed the street there, and rode back

to the Chalmers' gate. As his mother had anticipated, Miss Chalmers was out under the trees. He approached her bashfully, and she half rose as if on the point of flight. With a child's quick intuition Junior recognized her panic. The lady was afraid of him. This made him feel extremely grown up and formidable, but frightfully embarrassed, at the same time. He had left his wheel at the gate and now he stood like a statue where Miss Chalmers' impulsive movement had halted him, clutching the book as a drowning man clings to a life-preserver.

Miss Chalmers' recovery was immediate. She smiled at him over her shoulder in a way she had. "Why, it's Junior, isn't it? Good afternoon."

"Good afternoon," said Junior. He remembered what his mother had said about taking off his cap, reached for it, found himself bare-headed, and blushed to the roots of his hair.

Miss Chalmers tried to relieve his embarrassment. "Are you bringing me a book? It looks like a brand-new one."

"My uncle wrote it," said Junior, finding his voice. "And my mother sent it over for you to read, 'cause she's too busy."

"That's very kind. I'll read it at once and return it, tell her." And then, as Junior advanced, holding the book at arm's length, she inquired pleasantly,

"Does your uncle write books for boys, too, or just for grown-up people?"

Pollyanna would have found this conversational opening most encouraging. Indeed it was her hope of something of the sort that led her to give Junior permission to stay, if Miss Chalmers seemed to wish it. But the query awakened in the boy's mind the dark suspicion that she was making talk, condescending to his intellectual level, a point on which the average bright child is far more sensitive than the unintelligent adult. He promptly disclaimed all knowledge of the subject matter of his uncle's books, delivered the volume into Miss Chalmers' hands, and backed away. At a safe distance he called, "Goodbye," and she smiled at him over her shoulder, as she returned his farewell.

Junior, mounting his wheel with the consciousness of duty done, spied Jiggs across the street. That enterprising animal had climbed into a porch chair and, from this point of vantage, was looking up and down the block in search of some object of interest. His young master seeming to come under this specification, Jiggs jumped to the floor, and scrambled awkwardly down the steps. Junior had just time to notice that, contrary to all canine etiquette, Jiggs was leaving the house without his collar, when a limousine drew up to the curb.

Junior's hope that he might display his proficiency before the admiring eyes of Uncle John proved groundless, for the swarthy, heavily built man who stepped from the car, was a stranger. He snapped his fingers at Jiggs, who, with his usual friendliness, wagged his tail, and smelled the trousers leg of this new acquaintance, for purposes of identification. The next moment the man had picked the dog up and dropped him into the car. He himself followed instantly, and the door slammed to.

With a shout, Junior rode valiantly toward the car, which began to move just as he reached it. With all his confidence in his beloved bicycle, Junior realized that in a race it would be no match for an automobile and he acted on a suggestion he had picked up from an older boy he had once seen stealing a ride. He caught the curving rod of the rear bumper with his right hand, gripping his handle-bar with his left, and shouted as well as he could for the jolting, "Stop! That's my dog."

He had no idea that automobiles went so fast. As a matter of fact this particular car was far exceeding the speed limit in the suburb, but unluckily for Junior no one took any notice. He tried to shout again, threatening to tell his father, but the words seem to spill from his lips as formless cries. At once he realized that it was as much as he could

do to keep from falling. The speed at which he was moving made him feel as if a tremendous wind were blowing in his face. The rapid revolutions of the wheel kept his short legs jerking. He gripped the bars so tightly that it seemed he could not let go if he wanted to. But he was very far from such a wish. The man in the car had stolen Jiggs, and Junior had no idea of going home without his dog.

On and on and on! It was fortunate that the long, winding road was smooth, for, as Junior grew weary, he found it more difficult to keep his seat. He had counted on the car's stopping very soon, but apparently it was never going to stop. They crossed railway tracks just before the gates dropped. They swept through towns equipped with traffic lights, and every time, the red light winked out just as they came to the cross roads, and the green light winked on. Then open country, with nothing to check their speed.

Had Junior been versed in astronomical theories, he would have reminded himself of a small heavenly body, caught by the attraction of some huge planet, and doomed to swim eternally in its wake. Figures of speech aside, it seemed to him that he was fated to follow the swift-moving car forever. His fair skin showed crimson under a thick layer of dust. His stout legs ached. Queer tingling pains ran up his

right arm. But it never occurred to him to find relief by giving up.

Whether Junior would finally have rolled off into the road rather than relax his hold, it is impossible to say, for help arrived before he came to the final test. A policeman riding toward them, on a motorcycle with a side car, saw, as he passed, the unusual rear attachment of the automobile. A peremptory whistle halted the car's advance. It came to a stop as the policeman swung around in a circle and came back.

"What's wrong?" The driver of the car, a sallow, dark-skinned man, looked out resentfully. "I'm not going above twenty-five miles."

"What about this new fangled tail-light of yours?"

"What do you mean?"

As the car stopped, Junior had promptly tumbled off his wheel. Then he struggled to his feet and painfully limped into view. The policeman's little joke meant nothing to him, nor was he concerned with the swarthy man's bewilderment. He cried hoarsely, "He stole my dog!"

"What's that?" The policeman's jesting manner changed magically to alertness. The man in the car snorted.

"Little fool's crazy. Probably my dog looks like

his, and he caught a glimpse of it from the road and thought I'd stolen it."

"That isn't so. It isn't. He picked Jiggs up right in front of our house and put him into his car. I saw him."

As Junior's voice rang out shrilly, a dog barked inside the car, and then subsided with mysterious suddenness as if smothered under a robe. The policeman seemed interested.

"Let's look at your dog. I'd like to see his license tag."

The swarthy man cleared his throat. "Fact is we didn't put his collar on for this trip. Makes him nervous."

"Rather risky, wasn't it, to bring him along without a collar when you're so far from home. I'll have a look at the pup, anyway."

There was a noticeable activity in the rear of the car, terminating in an explosion of terrific snarling, as if some mastiff or great Dane had suddenly made up his mind to tear several obnoxious individuals limb from limb. Feminine shrieks punctured the hubbub. And then a door was opened hastily. Out tumbled a little thick-set dog, with bulging eyes, and an over-shot jaw. He made a rush for Junior, smelled him to make sure, and then went into the canine equivalent for hysterics. He leaped on

Junior, making frantic efforts to lick his chin, and then raced about him in such close circles that the boy felt giddy. He barked furiously, and then wound up howling, as if in despair of expressing his rapture. He bit at Junior's hands and clothing in a playful semblance of ferocity, gurgling affectionate growls. As a last resort he planted himself on Junior's feet, pressing tightly against the boy's legs, and then panted ecstatically, quite as much from the emotional strain as from his strenuous exercise.

The policeman's face was grim. "It's easy enough to see who that dog belongs to. Dogs can tell a lot without talking."

The swarthy man affected indignation, but the woman on the back seat spoke quickly, "Oh, well, Terry, let it go. It's not worth fussing about. The dog always was a surly, ill-tempered little beast. I'm glad to get rid of him."

"He's not either," shouted Junior; but the car had slid away. The big policeman, writing down the license number in case it should be useful later, turned to Junior with a smile that showed all his fine teeth. "Well, son, how long were you trailing that yellow-livered thief?"

"I don't know." Junior was intensely mortified by a blinding rush of tears. "It was an awful long

time," he declared, winking rapidly to dispose if possible, of the tell-tale drops before the man in uniform should spy them.

"Where do you live, anyway?"

When Junior told him, the policeman could hardly believe his ears. "What! You little bantam, you! Do you mean that you held on to that bumper all those miles?"

A sudden lump in Junior's throat was making breathing difficult. All those miles! He looked at his little wheel lying on its side, as if it were as weary as its owner, and then down at Jiggs, panting against his knees, and a devastating wave of homesickness submerged him. He was far from home and had no way of getting there. Before he knew it, he was sobbing, and Jiggs, much distressed, nuzzled his palm with his no-account nose, and expressed his sympathy in consolatory whines.

The big policeman got off his wheel and picked Junior up in his arms as if he had been a baby. "There, son, I wouldn't cry any more. Not after playing the man the way you done today. Folks ain't going to steal dogs off you and get away with it, I'll say."

"My mother doesn't allow me to go off 'thout asking if I can." This seemed to Junior a good

excuse for his unmanly tears. "But I had to go quick or they'd 'a' got away."

"Sure thing. And if your ma don't want you any longer on account of your not minding, I'll be jiggered if I won't take you myself."

Junior perceived that the policeman was joking, and laughed huskily at the idea of his mother's not wanting him, whatever the circumstances. This was the signal for him to be deposited in the side car with Jiggs clasped in his arms. His little bicycle was added to the collection, and then the policeman took his seat and the motor cycle started off, roaring and sputtering after the manner of its kind. Junior forgot his long absence from home in his delight. He sat clasping Jiggs who, too, was thoroughly enjoying himself, and thrilled with a sense of adventure. The interested looks of the occasional pedestrians they encountered were intoxicatingly flattering. Junior had no doubt that they considered him a youthful representative of the profession to which his companion belonged. He decided on the spot that, when he grew up, he would be a policeman.

CHAPTER V

A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

THE hour you spend in a railway station when the train is late seems interminable monotony. The hour in the hospital, when you are awaiting news from the operating room, is an eternity of apprehension. But an hour at home, on a busy Saturday, passes so quickly that the striking of the clock awakens your incredulity.

Pollyanna could not believe her ears when the clock struck three. She realized at once that Junior was over-doing it. Her small son's sensitive shyness was no secret to her, and, if Miss Chalmers had been bored by his lengthy stay, she must have concealed it admirably. Nevertheless an hour was over-doing the treatment on which Pollyanna relied. She took a quick inventory of herself in the mirror, to be sure she was presentable, and slipped across the street.

Miss Chalmers still occupied her favorite seat under the trees, and the book in which she was apparently absorbed was sufficient proof that

Junior had done his errand. But it was open, not at the first chapter, but so far along as to suggest that Miss Chalmers had the obnoxious habit of skipping, or that Junior had made a much shorter stay than his mother had supposed.

Pollyanna approached her neighbor with a curious sense of apprehension. "I see my small boy has been here," she began lightly.

Miss Chalmers started and looked up. "Oh, Mrs. Pendleton, I was so interested that I didn't hear you. It was very kind of you to send this over before you had a chance to read it yourself."

"I hope Junior didn't bore you with his chatter."

Miss Chalmers laughed. "No, indeed. In fact he was hardly here a minute."

It was seemingly not the day for protracted calls from the Pendleton family. Pollyanna stayed no longer than Junior had done, and quite forgot to ask Miss Chalmers how she was enjoying "Growing Pains."

Of course Junior had forgotten her instructions to come to her as soon as he had finished his errand. And apparently he had forgotten that he was not to go away on his wheel without especial permission. Judy and one of her little neighbors, Elizabeth Hunt, were stringing beads on the porch, and Pollyanna stopped to ask when they had seen

Junior last. But neither child could give any information as to Junior's whereabouts since luncheon.

"I guess he's gone off somewhere to play," conjectured Judy, stabbing viciously at a refractory bead. "It's been nice and peaceful 'thout any boys bothering 'round, hasn't it, 'Lizabeth?"

Elizabeth nodded full agreement. Both were at an age to hold the opposite sex in light esteem, an attitude which did not trouble Pollyanna, as she knew a period of backsliding was inevitable at no distant date.

Philip McGill and Jack Warner together with some of the young Hunts, were making kites in Jack's back-yard, but none of them had seen Junior. And neither had Nancy. And Nancy added to Pollyanna's perplexity by inquiring as to Jiggs' whereabouts.

"A man came to call for the paper, Miss Pollyanna, and a woman sellin' safety-pins, and that dog didn't bark neither time the bell rang. He's sick or run away, he is, he is."

Pollyanna hastily made the rounds of the neighborhood. No sign of Junior. No sign of Jiggs. She looked up and down the cross-streets for a glimpse of a boy on a wheel with a tired little dog trailing behind. But neither Junior nor Jiggs were in evidence. It was not a case of forgetfulness, that

was clear. Junior had been guilty of serious disobedience and must be punished.

As she returned home after her fruitless search, Miss Chalmers was just getting into her car. Pollyanna quickened her pace and came up breathless.

"Miss Chalmers, if you should happen to see Junior, will you tell him to come directly home. He's gone away on his wheel, and I can't help being anxious, he's such a little fellow."

Miss Chalmers glanced at her neighbor's troubled face. "Get in with me, Mrs. Pendleton," she said. "We'll drive around till we find him. He can't be far away."

"Oh no, he *can't* be far away."

"I haven't any especial destination," continued Miss Chalmers, "so we'll just drive up and down till we locate him. You don't care for a hat, do you?"

"No, but I'll speak to Nancy and tell her where I've gone."

The next half hour they explored the suburb thoroughly, but their search was as unavailing as Pollyanna's reconnoitering had been. "He must have gone home," said Miss Chalmers, speaking the more positively as she noted the growing fright in Pollyanna's eyes.

"Oh, yes, we must have missed him," agreed

Pollyanna. "Because he never would go as far from home as this, and we've looked everywhere."

But when the car waited at Pollyanna's door, that Miss Chalmers might hear of Junior's safe return, there was no such good news to impart. And Pollyanna's pretense at a smile was more pitiful than a burst of tears.

"He hasn't come in yet. I—I never knew him to do anything like this before."

"I'll keep driving around within reasonable distance," said Miss Chalmers, "and if I run across him, I'll bring him back at once." But the first place she drove to was the police station, to see if any word had come of an accident with a little boy the victim. The news was negatively reassuring, but she was not the first to hear it, for the car had hardly rolled away, when Pollyanna telephoned the station. Her next step was to telephone Jimmy's office in the city, though she knew in all probability he had left some time earlier. Indeed, the little bell had not stopped ringing when a cheerful voice called her name. "Pollyanna, where are you, honey? Frank's here."

There was something decidedly reassuring in the air of suppressed amusement with which the two men listened to the outpouring of her anxious heart. Pollyanna saw at once that to both of them it was

merely a case of disobedience. "It was too big a temptation, getting out on that wheel," said Lindsay. "He just had to give it a tryout."

"But he never did such a thing before," protested Pollyanna.

"Always has to be a first time," Jimmy reminded her. "Of course we'll have to punish him in a way that will help him to remember we mean what we say."

"But why doesn't he come home?" cried Pollyanna. "It's more than two hours now."

"Probably he thinks he might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb," suggested Jimmy, though she thought his expression changed slightly, as if the time she had mentioned was longer than he had supposed.

"Reminds me of one of my juvenile escapades," said Lindsay. "I went to a neighbor's I'd been forbidden to visit, and, after I had played there an hour or two, I suddenly realized the heinousness of my offense, and discovered that I didn't dare go home. It was nearly ten o'clock before I decided that the worst punishment would be preferable to spending the night in the open."

Pollyanna drew a long breath. "I hope Junior reaches that conclusion before ten o'clock. My hair would have turned completely white long before

that. Oh, yes, Jimmy, I forgot to tell you that Jiggs is missing, too."

Much to her relief, instead of considering that Jiggs' absence added to the mystery, Jimmy found it a partial solution. "That explains it. The poor little cuss has trailed along after Junior's bicycle, till he has given out completely, and Junior is probably walking home, carrying the dog, and pushing the wheel. If that's the case, he'll be punished enough before he gets here."

Time went on, limped on, it seemed to Pollyanna, for, whenever she looked at the clock, she was amazed at the inactivity of the minute hand. Her mood was hardly complimentary to the efforts of the two men to be entertaining. They were both extremely lively, telling funny stories, and covering her silence by their hearty laughter, but, when Pollyanna made an excuse to slip upstairs, Jimmy said in a low voice, "Think I'll go out and look around a bit. You know it's funny, the little chap's staying away in this fashion."

"All right, I'll come with you."

"If you don't mind, Frank, I wish you'd stay. If any bad news should come—Of course, I'm not at all nervous—"

"Of course not," his friend agreed hastily.

"But if anything like that should happen, it would

be better for one of us to be here. I'll be back very soon. And by the way, Frank if the phone rings, you'd better answer it."

Again Lindsay said, "All right," but, when the telephone began ringing before Jimmy had been out of the house two minutes, he was immediately convinced that it was all wrong. He jumped for it, and fairly snatched the receiver from the hook. "Hello," he said in a lowered voice, so as not to attract Pollyanna's attention.

A queer sound came over the wire, like a sharp catch of the breath. Then a woman's voice, noticeably tremulous, said, "Is—is this Mr. Pendleton?"

Young Lindsay gave a violent start. A wave of color rose to the roots of his hair, and quickly receded, leaving him quite pale. His own voice was far from steady as he answered, "No. I'm just a friend of Mr. Pendleton's. Did you wish to speak to him?"

"I only wanted to know if the little boy had come?"

"Not yet."

"Oh!" There was a note of distress in the musical voice. "I'm so sorry. I'm afraid Mrs. Pendleton is anxious."

"I rather think so, though probably there's no real reason to be."

"I hope not. Well—thank you very much."

"Would you like to speak with Mrs. Pendleton?"

"It's not necessary to call her. I only wanted to know if Junior had come."

"And who shall I tell her called?"

"Oh, it doesn't matter. I may call again later."

"And if you do, I hope it may be my good fortune to answer the phone, Lorraine."

"Frank!" There was such a world of love and heartbreak in the cry, that the young man took a backward step, as if the solid floor had heaved under his feet. "Dearest," he breathed in answer.

"O Frank, hush. Why did you let me go on? I thought it sounded like your voice, but I couldn't believe—"

"And I knew your dear voice from the first word, and it's been like heaven to talk with you, even if you didn't know who was speaking."

"Oh, don't Frank, don't! This is madness. Just when a wound is beginning to heal, to tear it open again."

"Mine hasn't begun to heal, and never will until you love me enough to marry me."

"Oh, let us not go over this. It's so useless, so cruel."

"I won't admit it's useless as long as we both live, and the cruelty is in not giving me a chance."

"Goodbye, Frank." She spoke with decision, but she had not hung up the receiver, and he only said, "When will you let me see you again?"

"Never."

"Lorraine, you can't mean that."

"I do mean it. I came here to get away from everyone I had ever known, including you. We are very comfortable here. But it is in your power to drive me away if you insist on something I must always refuse."

The young man was silent for a moment and when at length he spoke, his voice was weary. "Since you put it that way, Lorraine, I have no choice but to do as you say."

"It's for your sake as well as my own," she cried, defending herself against his unspoken reproach. "I wanted to spare us both. And now, goodbye."

There was an accent of finality about the last word. The receiver clicked into place before Lindsay could speak again. The young man hesitated a moment, and then, realizing that the conversation was definitely ended, turned away with a half groan, and wiped the drops of perspiration from his forehead. And at that moment Judy tumbled into the house, exploding like a firecracker.

"Mother! Mother! Junior's got took up by a p'liceman. Come quick."

Pollyanna was downstairs before Lindsay could get to the door, and, as they dashed out of the house, Jimmy came into view, running with a speed reminiscent of the days when he had been one of the best sprinters of his university. All three had the same thought, that Junior had been injured and that a policeman had brought him home.

But it took only a glance at the party at their door to allay their apprehension. The big policeman was grinning; Jiggs, who had jumped from Junior's arms the instant the motor cycle halted, rushed to greet his mistress, barking ecstatically; and, while Junior was uneasy in his mind, the celerity with which he leaped from the side-car, and ran into his mother's arms, set at rest her fears.

"Mother, I disobeyed, but I just *had* to. A man stole Jiggs and I hung on behind on my wheel for an awful long way. Do you think you'll have to punish me, mother, as long as I got Jiggs back?"

Pollyanna thought not, and she was still more of that opinion when the big policeman filled in the details of Junior's story. Though her eyes were swimming in tears, she could see the radiant pride of Jimmy's face as he stood with his arm about his son. Jiggs, a little disappointed to find that he was not the centre of attention, bit playfully at their ankles, and barked peremptorily from time to time.

Dinner waited while Nancy joined the circle that listened to the tale of Junior's adventures, including a half hour's stay at the police station.

"There were a lot of nice policemen there," explained Junior, "but I think my policeman was the nicest of all. They called me 'Buster' and they said if I wanted to join 'em, when I grew up, I'd be a credit to the force. Wouldn't you like me to be a policeman, mother? Then I'd find out who stole your silver that Christmas and I'd put him in jail."

Pollyanna thought it would be time to decide that important question later. She was brimming over with pride in Junior's pluck, but appalled when she thought of the risk he had run. Some day she must explain to him what he had done, but not on this joyful occasion.

It was about eight o'clock before Lindsay told her of Miss Chalmers' inquiry and Pollyanna went at once to the telephone to pass on the good news. But the maid who answered her ring, told her that Miss Chalmers had gone to bed with a sick headache, and did not wish to be disturbed.

CHAPTER VI

"GROWING PAINS"

More than a week passed before Pollyanna succeeded in seeing Lorraine Chalmers. She did not appear in the garden as was her custom. The automobile took Mr. Chalmers to the train every morning, and met him on his return in the late afternoon, but otherwise was not in evidence. Pollyanna boldly presented herself at the door, only to be told that Miss Chalmers was not feeling well and asked to be excused.

The autographed copy of "Growing Pains" came back with a little note thanking Pollyanna for the loan of it, but failing to express any pleasure in its perusal. Pollyanna noticed the omission without resenting it. Of course Lorraine had enjoyed the book, and of course she would say so when they met. But before this happened Franklin Lindsay invited Jimmy and herself to take dinner with him in the city, and, when she was forced to admit that nearly a week had passed without her getting a glimpse of her neighbor across the street, Lindsay

momentarily forgot that the paramount duty of a host is cheerfulness.

"My fault, of course," he lamented. "If I'm not careful I really will drive her away. And next time she'll make a better job of losing herself."

Pollyanna did her best to be encouraging. "Perhaps you hadn't anything to do with it. The maid says she's sick."

"Heartsickness, I'm afraid. Lorraine's health is practically perfect. She was always joking about it."

Pollyanna recalled the young woman's own testimony on the dramatic occasion of their first meeting. She had called herself, "one of those tragically robust people who outlived all their friends, all their hopes and all their happiness." Her face shadowed at the remembrance, and seeing this, Lindsay reproached himself.

"I'm a pretty host. I invite you to dinner and then spoil your appetite by talking about my troubles."

"Don't worry," Jimmy consoled him. "My wife is immensely sympathetic; but, in spite of that, she manages to eat three square meals a day, don't you, dear?"

"It would be silly to lose my appetite over this," Pollyanna defended herself. "As long as I'm absolutely sure things are coming out all right." But

for all her brave words, her cheerfulness that evening was premediated rather than spontaneous.

Two days later, when she saw Lorraine in the garden, she dashed across the street, as if afraid of her neighbor's vanishing, like an apparition. The girl's face testified that her week of retirement had been a hard one, but whether the trouble had been physical or mental, Pollyanna could not know. Without being too explicit, she expressed her sympathy and Miss Chalmers thanked her with an air of wishing that she would change the subject, which Pollyanna promptly did.

"How did you enjoy 'Growing Pains'? You see I feel a proprietary interest in Mr. Carew's books."

"You must be very proud of him," the other hedged. "He has a wonderfully vivid style, hasn't he?"

Pollyanna looked at her. "Why—you didn't like it!" she cried, such a blending of surprise and disappointment in her tone that Miss Chalmers flushed, even while she smiled propitiatingly.

"As far as the plot goes, it's not the sort of thing I care for particularly. But I'm not so narrow that I can't admire the book's fine points." She added apologetically, "Of course I know I'm old-fashioned."

"Oh, I see," said Pollyanna. This was an empty

boast, for, as a matter of fact, she was quite in the dark as to the girl's meaning. She did see, however, that her own disappointment had been sufficiently marked to embarrass the other, and she began to tell the details of Junior's exciting trip, her first opportunity, though the apprehension and distress of that harrowing afternoon seemed to belong to the remote past. Whether Miss Chalmers was really interested, or merely felt that she had shown herself rather unappreciative in the matter of the book, she asked a great many questions, praised Junior's pluck, and kept Pollyanna talking nearly an hour. But, though their conversation was so protracted, a young man named Lindsay was not once mentioned.

Pollyanna's disappointment piqued her interest in James Carew's latest book. She had always enjoyed everything he wrote, and she assured herself that she would have read his books with the same breathless interest had she not counted the author among her friends. As a matter of fact she had postponed the reading of "Growing Pains" till she and Jimmy could read it together, but now she determined that she would wait no longer. She must find out what Miss Chalmers meant by her assertion that her taste was too old-fashioned for James' new book.

Luckily Jimmy had nothing else on hand for the evening, and, as soon as the children were in bed, they settled themselves for a thorough good time Pollyanna brought out her mending basket, but with the mental reservation that, if the book grew too interesting for a divided attention, the mending, not the reading, should suffer. She was, of course, aware that in an age which makes its ideal of pleasure synonymous with perpetual motion, Jimmy and she were exceptional in their enjoyment of a quiet evening with a good book. But perhaps because they had learned through a more bitter experience than comes to most children, an appreciation of home, they really looked forward to these occasions, with no company but each other, and no entertainment but a book.

Jimmy studied the sensational figure on the jacket with critical eye. "Can't say I admire this frowsy-headed female. Thought James had better taste in heroines."

"Oh, well, the artist doesn't always get the author's idea. I'm sure if Sadie's head were frowsy, James would disapprove. Now as soon as I find the right shade of silk, I'll be ready."

It was not to prove, Pollyanna soon realized, one of the evenings that emptied out her mending basket. Before the end of the first chapter she was

sitting with folded hands, her expression as worried as if she had just caught Junior in a fib, or discovered white spots on Judy's tonsils. James Carew's latest heroine did not appeal to her. On page one the lady had discovered that her husband was a bore. On page two she grasped the fact that her home was a prison and her happiness a sham. And these discoveries were coincident with her awakening to the transcendent attractiveness of another man, the latter hampered by a quite unnecessary wife. There was little action in the first chapter, but the heroine's rebellion and bitterness were vividly portrayed, her growing antipathy to her husband, the rasping of those intimacies inevitable when two incompatible people are living under the same roof.

Jimmy's eyebrows went up after one particularly daring reference. "Our friend James seems to be cutting loose," he said.

"I'd like to shake him," cried Pollyanna, exasperated. "Why did he want to write about such a detestable woman? However," she added, as if reproaching her own impatience, "she'll probably begin to improve in a chapter or two."

But, though Jimmy read on till long past bed time, the heroine seemed further than ever from realizing the error of her ways. The man whose

acquaintance had proved so helpful in revealing her husband's deficiencies had now become her acknowledged lover, and she was considering his invitation to accompany him to Europe, vacillating between violent, if rather belated, attacks of concern for her child, and moods when her lover seemed the only thing that mattered. But though in her coquetting with temptation she seemed in doubt as to the outcome, the reader felt reasonably sure how it would end. At the conclusion of the tenth chapter, Jimmy looked at the clock, then shut the book with emphasis.

"Finish it if you like, Pollyanna, but I've had enough. I don't care a darn what becomes of her."

"No wonder Miss Chalmers praised the style," sighed Pollyanna. "There wasn't anything else she could say without being disagreeable."

"It would take more than a good style to sweeten that nauseating dose," declared Jimmy. "I'm afraid you'll have to give the truth the go-by, when you tell James how you like his book."

"Indeed I shan't," cried Pollyanna. "I'll tell him I'd like to box his ears. However the book turns out, I'm frightfully disappointed."

As Jimmy persisted in his refusal to accompany the heroine of "Growing Pains" any further on her tortuous course, Pollyanna read the remainder

of the book by herself, and with increasing disapproval. It was true that the woman died in poverty in the closing chapter, but in Pollyanna's opinion, that was just three hundred and eighty-two pages too late. While the author had not openly espoused the cause of his heroine, there seemed to Pollyanna an implication that she differed from so-called virtuous wives in courage rather than in principle. Indeed the very title suggested that her suffering was the price of spiritual maturity.

When Sadie called her up at the end of the week to invite her and Jimmy to dinner, Pollyanna promptly accepted. "But please don't have anything very nice," she said, "because I'm going to make myself perfectly obnoxious."

Sadie laughed indulgently. "I suppose you mean about the book."

"Yes, that's it. What ails that husband of yours? I'm furious with him, and I'm going to improve the first opportunity to tell him so."

"That sounds exactly like Aunt Ruth," said Sadie, still with that suggestion of amused superiority. "She's been scolding for the last month, but the book has been getting some wonderful notices."

"You don't mean that you like it, Sadie?" Pollyanna's amazement showed in her voice.

Sadie hesitated. "Well, no. It's not exactly my

taste. But an author has to give the public what it wants."

"There are several publics," Pollyanna was beginning, and then she checked herself. "I'm not going to waste my ammunition on you," she declared. "I'll save it up for James on Tuesday, and please don't give us such a nice dinner that it'll make me feel amiable, for I'm really very angry."

On the following Tuesday Pollyanna did not wait for Jimmy, but came into the city early, and went directly to the new home the Carews had recently purchased. As she started up the steps, a young girl was coming down, a very pretty girl, Pollyanna thought. Indeed she impressed her as so extremely pretty that she turned her head, as the girl passed, to assure herself that her vivid imagination had not led her astray, as it frequently did. But there was positively no mistake. Her backward glance gave her the benefit of a delightfully demure profile, the curve of a cheek tinted like a seashell, and a glint of yellow hair, just showing under a close-fitting hat.

Pollyanna was one of the women, by no means exceptional, who delight in the beauty of their own sex. In her enthusiasm she quite forgot her avowed intention of making herself disagreeable. She greeted her hostess with the question, "Sadie, who

is the little beauty who has just been calling on you?"

"Calling on me? Oh, you probably mean Miss Merrill. She's just left."

"And who's Miss Merrill?"

"Why, she's James secretary. I thought you knew he had arrived at the dignity of a permanent secretary."

"Well, if James can't get inspiration out of dictating to her, he's hopeless. And I advise him to ask the artist who illustrates his next book to use Miss Merrill as a model. I disliked the pictures of that Mrs.Rutledge almost as much as I detested her. Oh! There you are James Carew. Come in and be scolded."

The author of "Growing Pains" stood laughing in the doorway, his crutches under his arms. "Hello, you little spitfire. That's a nice way to thank me for a copy of my most mature and thoughtful book."

"Mature! Thoughtful!" Pollyanna repeated the words disdainfully, thus making it clear that they were far from expressing her sentiments.

"That's what the critics say, anyway."

"The book is getting wonderful reviews, Pollyanna," Sadie added gravely. She loved Pollyanna, but she adored her husband, and had done her

humble best to confirm him in all his weaknesses, by never acknowledging either to herself or to others, that he could possibly be in the wrong.

"I don't care what anybody says," retorted Pollyanna, "I detest it. Why did you ever write it, James?"

"An artist has no choice," the author explained impressively. "He must picture life as he sees it."

"But he has a choice about the particular phase of life he'll represent," Pollyanna persisted. "If you were a painter, you wouldn't go to a leper colony for a model, would you? And why should you picture ugliness in writing any more than in painting?"

"I'm afraid your hopelessly old-fashioned, my dear." James still laughed, but his color rose. As is true of most who possess the artistic temperament, praise was the breath of his nostrils, and he was unable to face with equanimity the transformation of Pollyanna from his most enthusiastic admirer, into a caustic critic. Sadie, always responsive to his mood, showed her resentment unmistakably, as she said, "Literary tastes change like everything else, Pollyanna. And if a man is to be successful, he must keep abreast of the times."

There was a peculiar lack of spontaneity in the words. Pollyanna was suddenly sure that, after

Sadie's first perusal of the book, possibly in manuscript, her qualms had been appeased by the very arguments she was advancing as her personal convictions.

"There are quite a number of different publics with varying tastes," Pollyanna said quietly. "Lots of people look forward to the publication of a new book by James Carew, and I'm afraid most of them who read 'Growing Pains' will be disappointed just as I was. And anyway, James," she whirled upon her friend, "it's not only a matter of dollars and cents. One must think of one's influence."

She was astonished to have him break into an angry laugh. "Influence," he exploded. "Good heavens, Pollyanna. You talk as if I were a Sunday school teacher."

"But your books do have an influence, James. You can't deny that."

"If they have, it's incidental. My business is writing novels, not teaching or preaching, and, if my readers take my books as a standard of living and muddle things, it's their business."

Pollyanna perceived that she was carrying out her resolve to be disagreeable altogether too literally. She did not want to hurt James' feelings nor anger Sadie. Nor did she wish to return her friend's hospitality by making everybody uncom-

fortable. And though the arguments were crowding up her lips till her throat ached with them, she simply changed the subject.

"Tell me about Miss Merrill," she said. "Is she really a good secretary? You know it's hard to believe that anyone so ornamental can be useful, too?"

CHAPTER VII

A FAMILY GROUP

POLLYANNA had a bright idea and, strange to say, it concerned a present for Jimmy. Each year on the anniversary of their wedding, Pollyanna and Jimmy made each other some little gift, and each year it was harder for Pollyanna to decide what the gift should be. Jimmy's task was comparatively easy, for owing to Pollyanna's practically inexhaustible list of desires, almost anything her friends were likely to give her was bound to be just what she wanted.

With Jimmy it was different. Well as she knew his taste, Pollyanna never felt sure of pleasing him when she selected his gifts. Of course, Jimmy always welcomed books, but she had given him so many books that, in spite of a change of authors and titles, they had begun to seem an old story. Jimmy had a fondness for selecting his own neckties, and she never bought him a shirt since the extravagant white silk, checked by narrow lines of blue. When Jimmy made his appearance at the

office, wearing his new shirt, the men with one accord, seized their pencils and started to work cross-word puzzles on his cuffs. Jimmy had told her this as a joke, but to Pollyanna it seemed a reflection on her taste, and since that time, she had left her husband to choose his own wearing apparel.

It was at Aunt Ruth's that she found a solution to her problem. Jimmy had taken advantage of an unlooked-for holiday to send her into town, informing her that he was quite capable of looking after the children for twenty-four hours, and bidding her make the most of her time. On Aunt Ruth's dressing-table she had seen a photograph of Sadie, with little Jamie in her arms, and at once she knew that this was the answer she had wanted. She would have a picture of the children for Jimmy's anniversary present. She would go to the best children's photographer in the city. For once expense should be a secondary consideration. Pollyanna wondered at herself that this satisfactory settlement of her difficulty had not occurred to her long before.

It was Friday evening when she reached her resolution, and Saturday morning in spite of Aunt Ruth's protests, she took an early train for home, passing Jimmy on the way. If the photographs were to be finished for the anniversary, she had no time to lose. On her return Pollyanna found her

family scattered, but summoning Junior from the back yard, she sent him in search of Judy. Judy, it appeared, was paying an early call on Elizabeth Hunt, so early, indeed, that Elizabeth was not yet dressed, and the family breakfast belonged to the mysteries of the future. Mr. Hunt, of course, had made his own coffee, and taken his departure some time before.

Her trio assembled, Pollyanna announced her plan. She had expected it to be received with rapture, for Junior and Judy were still young enough to regard a ride on the train, even for no greater distance than a dozen miles, as a thrilling experience. To her surprise, Junior began at once to make objections.

"I wouldn't do it if I was you, mother. It costs lots of money to have pictures taken."

"But it's for Daddy's present, son. We'd rather economize on other things and give him something nice, wouldn't we?"

"I'm 'fraid Ruth will wriggle an' spoil everything," persisted Junior. "And Judy's nose is so little it won't look good in a picture."

Judy breathed hard. "My nose looks as good as the hole where your tooth came out."

"Children, I'm surprised. I'm not a bit afraid that we won't have a nice picture, and I know

Daddy will be delighted. Now we must hurry, for I want to be back before he comes home, so he won't suspect anything. You must be very careful not to let him know."

But even the exhilarating prospect of keeping a secret from his father was not enough to arouse the strangely unresponsive Junior to enthusiasm, and he went off muttering to himself, while Pollyanna called Nancy to her aid in dressing Judy and the baby. In about an hour from the time she had reached home, she was again on the way to the city, this time with three companions.

In the big studio, where dozens of family groups were photographed daily, Pollyanna's services were limited to taking off the children's wraps, and seeing that their hair was in order. Then an attendant led the three away, explaining that it would be better for her not to be present. "We find that the children are usually self-conscious if the mother is in the room," she explained.

Pollyanna submitted with rather bad grace. She was sure no one knew as well as herself when her children were looking their best. Indeed Ruth had a dear little smile reserved exclusively for her mother. But apparently from the standpoint of the modern expert, the mother's usefulness extended

little beyond bringing the children into the world. Pollyanna paced the floor and hoped for the best.

All the way home she urged upon the children the importance of keeping their trip to the city a profound secret from their father, and Junior and Judy pledged themselves to silence. Ruth was too young to understand such a promise, and Pollyanna resolved to keep a sharp watch, and interrupt her if she should attempt some confused confidence that might awaken Jimmy's suspicions. But beyond a sing-song repetition of the words, "Birdie f'y, birdie f'y" which Pollyanna suspected to be reminiscent of the photographer's attempts to focus her attention on the camera, Ruth said nothing to arouse her father's curiosity, and Jimmy seemed indifferent to his little daughter's newly awakened interest in ornithology.

Mrs. McGill and the postman made their appearance at Pollyanna's door at the same moment Monday morning, and Pollyanna ignored her friend, while she pounced upon a brown envelope of imposing dimensions. Mrs. McGill regarded her amusedly.

"Don't mind me. I suppose it's a legacy, or something like that."

"Oh, Anne, excuse me. I had the children's

picture taken Saturday as a surprise for Jimmy, and here are the proofs. I'm so glad they were prompt."

"Yes, its a good thing if you are in a hurry," said Mrs. McGill, following her into the living room. "I had to take Philip three times before I got a picture that suited me. And if you are having a group, it's even harder, for one out of the three is pretty sure to be unsatisfactory."

But in spite of this disheartening prophecy, Pollyanna regarded the first proof approvingly. It was true that somehow or other, Junior's hair had become slightly mussed on his way to the camera, and Ruth looked decidedly shy, but a total stranger would have pronounced the three children charming. Pollyanna passed the proof to her neighbor, and was gratified to have her own impression confirmed.

"Lovely! Pollyanna, you certainly should be a proud woman."

"I'm eaten up by vanity," Pollyanna confessed, and gave her attention to the next proof. This was not as good. Apparently Junior had been urged to look pleasant, with the usual disastrous consequences. He was smirking with the inanity characteristic of most adults under like provocation. The third proof was better, and Pollyanna, passing it on to Mrs. McGill with a jocund comment, broke her sentence in two and sat transfixed.

Mrs. McGill glanced up. Pollyanna's eyes were bulging. She actually looked frightened. "What's the matter?" laughed her friend, entertained by this exhibition of maternal weakness. "Doesn't it do the babies justice?"

For answer Pollyanna held out the proof, and Mrs. McGill's gasp of astonishment rendered her temporarily dumb. The three children sat much as in the previous picture and behind them, straight, tall and smiling, stood Jimmy.

Mrs. McGill had an odd impression of groping her way through a fog. "Why—I thought you said the pictures were to be a surprise to Mr. Pendleton."

"They are."

"But—he was there."

"No."

"But, Pollyanna," Mrs. McGill's tone was combative. "He *must* have been there. It's his photograph."

"He wasn't there," Pollyanna insisted. "He didn't know anything about it."

The two women looked at each other aghast. Mrs. McGill again picked up the proof and scrutinized it. "But it's Mr. Pendleton's photograph. It seems to me that I recognize even his clothes."

Pollyanna looked over her shoulder. "It's his

grey checked suit," she answered tonelessly, "and the necktie Uncle John gave him."

"Do you think he could have got into the photographer's without your knowing it, and done this to surprise you?"

Pollyanna shook her head. "They had a very busy morning Saturday, because Friday was a holiday. Jimmy said it was half-past two before he could stop for luncheon."

Mrs. McGill heaved an explosive sigh. "The Society for Psychical Research ought to look into this," she exclaimed. "It's the most marvelous thing. I always thought those spirit photographs were fakes, but now I don't know."

"Spirit photographs," exclaimed Pollyanna excitedly. "Jimmy's not a spirit."

"Of course not, but if he wasn't there, it must have been a photograph of his spirit, mustn't it?"

Pollyanna did not answer. She gazed unhappily at the mysterious picture, so unmistakably Jimmy's that she recognized even the handkerchief, the tip of which protruded jauntily from his coat-pocket.

"I suppose it just shows how constantly he is always thinking of you all," continued Mrs. McGill in a tone of extreme uneasiness. "This is his astral body, that's all. I'm sure you are too sensible to believe in signs."

"Signs," repeated Pollyanna. "Signs of what?"

"Nothing." Mrs. McGill spoke with the utmost conviction. "It's not like seeing an apparition of a living person, and even if it were, there's no reason to think that's a sign of death."

Pollyanna looked at the proof again, her expression so woe-begone that Mrs. McGill forced herself to laugh. "Pollyanna dear, don't be silly. You're too level-headed to take any stock in such nonsense."

"Yes, I know. But this morning I was too level-headed to believe that you could take a man's picture when he wasn't there. And yet it's happened."

"It's a marvelous age," said Mrs. McGill. "Look at the radio." But her affectation of accepting Jimmy's photograph as belonging in the category of twentieth century marvels was clearly a hollow pretense. She stayed till the children came home to luncheon, and throughout the morning continued to talk in the irritatingly cheerful manner characteristic of people who are trying to hide dark forebodings. And Pollyanna carried on her part of the conversational battledore and shuttlecock, with the surface of her mind, all the time thinking of something else.

Even as a child, Pollyanna had never been superstitious. Her healthy mind had been unfavorable soil for the vague fears that distress so many

imaginative children. Yesterday, if anyone might have suggested that she would become a prey to superstitious terrors, she would have laughed in the prophet's face. But today something had happened that was beyond explanation. Jimmy's photograph, taken without Jimmy's physical presence, shattered the certainties on which she had built her philosophy of life. If such a thing could happen, how could she be sure that there was no truth in other things she had dismissed as absurdities, signs, omens, uncanny happenings that told of coming disaster.

She resolved to make sure. That evening she said to Jimmy, "Were you away from the office Saturday morning?"

"No. Why?"

"I just wanted to know."

"I didn't leave the building from the time I got in till half-past two, not even for luncheon. It was an extra busy day."

"I see." Pollyanna sat very quiet. To herself she added, "That settles it." The impossible had happened. And now the question was, was it an omen of coming ill, or merely a mysterious occurrence over which one must marvel, but which need awaken no apprehension. Anne McGill had spoken glibly of the astral body. She must find out what she meant.

The next morning she had a surprise. Another brown envelope, like that received the previous day, brought a second set of proofs. The photographer had been generous, Pollyanna reflected, as she looked over them listlessly. One of them seemed to her better than any of the first six, chiefly because Junior's hair was smoother, showing that these proofs, while arriving later, had been taken before the others. Pollyanna seated herself at the writing-desk and sent in her order, explaining the imperative necessity that the pictures be finished by the fifteenth.

The arrival of Pollyanna's tenth anniversary found her vaguely uneasy. The photographs had arrived and were quite satisfactory, but she was haunted by the thought of that other mysterious group in which Jimmy appeared, though at the time it was taken, he was hard at work in an office-building a quarter of a mile away. Pollyanna had given much consideration to the question of taking Jimmy into her confidence regarding the psychic photograph, but up to the present, her instinct was against it. Jimmy would, of course, make light of the whole affair, especially if he thought her nervous, but under his pretended indifference she guessed distaste and possible uneasiness. No one had less leaning toward the occult than Jimmy. No

one would look with less favor on a psychic photograph of himself.

She slipped downstairs before breakfast on the morning of the fifteenth, and laid a carefully wrapped parcel by Jimmy's plate. Then she hurried back to her room to finish Ruth's toilet and don a fresh morning dress. Jimmy was humming a tune as he finished shaving, and the mirror reflected the face of a man who has found life good. "Well, anyway, we've had ten wonderful years," said Pollyanna to herself, and then felt the smart of tears under her lids.

As a rule Jimmy was the last one down to breakfast, but on this occasion, rather to Pollyanna's vexation, he got ahead of her. However, even if he had discovered the parcel by his plate, he would not think of opening it till she came down. Jimmy always played fair.

As a matter of fact, Jimmy was on the porch, looking for the morning paper, when Pollyanna lifted little Ruth to her high chair. Then she turned to her place, and found her plate covered by a flat package, wrapped in brown paper. She snatched it up and waited impatiently for Jimmy to put in his appearance.

He came in with irritating deliberation. "Hello!"

he exclaimed, looking around the table. "What's all this—a bit of Christmas in advance?"

"We know." Junior was very superior. "You and mother got married."

Jimmy picked up his package, and Pollyanna tore the wrappings from hers. For a moment neither spoke. Pollyanna stared wildly at her gift, a family group of three smiling children, with a tall young man standing behind them. She drew her hand across her eyes as if to remove something that obscured her vision.

Jimmy whistled as his anniversary present was revealed. "Who says that great minds don't run in the same direction?" He looked across at his unnaturally silent wife. "What's the matter, honey? Don't you like it?"

"Jimmy," gasped Pollyanna, "When—how—" She was incapable of finishing the question, but fortunately that was unnecessary.

"I took the children in that holiday you spent with Aunt Ruth and Uncle John."

"And the very next day, mother *would* have our pictures taken again," cried Junior, voicing his grievance at last. "And I kept 'vising her not to as hard as I could 'thout telling."

"Yes, you did, darling. Mother didn't understand." All at once Pollyanna felt a weight lifted

from her heart. She looked happily at the photograph, no longer a harrowing mystery. "I just love it, Jimmy."

"I was a little worried for fear it wouldn't be done in time," Jimmy explained as he settled down to his grape-fruit. "I told them not to send out the proofs. Of course, that would have given everything away, and when I called for them Monday, they weren't ready. Talked to them like a Dutch uncle to make them understand that however late they were in starting, they'd have to have the pictures ready for the fifteenth."

"It's awful hard keeping two secrets at a time." complained Junior. "We couldn't tell mother that daddy had our pictures taken. We just had to wait."

Jimmy patted his shoulder. "You did finely, son. The ability to keep secrets is always admirable, but in a man, it is indispensable."

"Women can keep them, too, if they put their minds to it," said Pollyanna. It was at this moment that she decided that Jimmy was never to know the story of the psychic photograph.

CHAPTER VIII

POLLYANNA GETS A START

"MOTHER, I went to see the spider lady all by myself."

Pollyanna dropped her sewing and whirled upon her daughter. "Judy Pendleton, what did you say?"

"I didn't make it up." Judy looked rather frightened. "That's what all the kids—"

"Judy!"

"I mean that's what all the children call her. 'Cause of that thing on her face looks like a spider's web, mother."

"Miss Chalmers is very beautiful, Judy, except for her scarred cheek. Did you ever notice what lovely eyes she has? And her hair is the color of little Ruth's. There's only one thing about her that isn't beautiful, and yet you call her the spider lady." Pollyanna reflected, even as she gazed reprovingly at Judy's downcast face, that children are men and women in miniature.

"I didn't call her that when I went to see her, mother."

Pollyanna laughed in spite of herself. "I should hope not. What did you talk about?"

"I told her all 'bout the Glad Game."

"How did you come to do that?" Pollyanna asked uneasily. Past experience had made her somewhat apprehensive regarding Judy's tact.

"I told her Junior had a jog'raphy lesson 'bout Vesuvius, an' I said I was glad I wasn't Vesuvius, an' she said I was a queer little girl. I don't think it's queer not to want to be a mountain that vomits all the time—such a big stomach to be sick with. You wouldn't like to be a sick mountain, would you, mother?"

Judy's question was purely rhetorical. She did not wait for her mother's answer.

"When she said I was queer, I said I was just playing the Glad Game an' then I 'splained it, all about your crutches when you were a little girl, an' Uncle James' legs an' everything. An' I told her she could play it, if she liked," Judy ended with a complacency her mother did not share.

"I believe that I'll run over and see Miss Chalmers myself," she said, dropping her work. "I've been meaning to take her another of Uncle James' books." As a matter of fact, she was anxious to correct the unfavorable impression of her friend's literary output, and she took a long moment to

make her selection from the steadily lengthening row of novels which bore James Carew's name.

"Can I go with you?" Judy demanded, as eagerly as if she had not just come from the house across the street.

"No; one visit a day is enough. I'll take sister with me and you can finish stringing your beads." Pollyanna went toward the play-room where Ruth had been employing herself happily for the last hour, but just as she reached the door, she was surprised to have it slammed in her face. And when she turned the knob, the door opened slowly, owing to the fact that Ruth's plump little body was braced against it.

"What did you shut the door for, darling?" Pollyanna asked, puzzled by this lack of hospitality.

"Want to be a bad dirl," Ruth explained, grinning up at her mother, like an impish cherub.

"I know better. You want to be a good girl, and go visiting with mother. Come quick, so I can put on your dress with the rose buds."

In the beflowered frock, Ruth looked so captivating that to the fond mother she seemed a potent charm against low spirits. But hardly had they reached their destination when she realized her mistake. Evidently it was one of Miss Chalmers' bad days. She greeted her callers with no pretense

of cordiality and her thanks were both perfunctory and formal. The demands of courtesy satisfied, she relapsed into an unsmiling silence, obviously awaiting their departure.

Pollyanna resolved to stay only long enough to guard against the impression that she had taken offense. As if unaware that she was being held at arm's length, she began to talk of the book she had brought with her.

"I'm rather glad you didn't like 'Growing Pains,' for if you had, you might not care for Mr. Carew's other books. But I'll be disappointed if you don't like 'A Golden Sorrow.' It's not exactly humorous, you know, but it's cheerful and gay."

Miss Chalmers' listless hand fluttered the pages of the book on her knee. "After all, don't you find professional optimism rather a bore? Everyone knows life is hideous. Why try to whitewash it, and pretend that all's well with the world?"

Pollyanna looked gravely at the embittered face. She realized the hopelessness of reasoning with one in so unreasonable a mood, yet found it impossible to keep silent.

"Do you really feel that way about life? It hasn't always been easy for me, but as a whole, I've found it happy and beautiful. And I'm sure James Carew doesn't feel as you do, though when he was

a small boy, things were so dreadfully hard. He was brilliant and ambitious, but so handicapped by his crippled body and lack of opportunity that he couldn't see how he would ever be able to earn a living. But even then, I'm sure, life seemed to him a wonderful adventure."

"Is this the Glad Game?" There was a suggestion of a sneer in Miss Chalmers' voice. "Judy was enlightening me on the subject today. She even assured me that I could play it—*I* play the Glad Game. Think of it!"

Pollyanna was silent, thinking as she had often thought before that happiness and misery are largely relative. Had Miss Chalmers been a poor girl struggling to make ends meet, fearful of losing her job, the scarred cheek, Pollyanna suspected, would have come to seem a minor matter by now. As she strove to compose some answer to the girl's violent speech which would be tactful, yet not too soothing, a taxi-cab stopped before the house. Miss Chalmers starting up, ready for flight, sank back in her chair as she recognized the occupant. "Oh," she said indifferently, "it's only father."

Pollyanna had said to Jimmy, she remembered, that Mr. Chalmers was about the age of John Pendleton, but as he came toward them across the grass, she realized that Uncle John would have a

right to protest against the comparison. Face to face, Mr. Chalmers looked much older than she had thought him. His color, she noticed, was not good.

Miss Chalmers introduced them a little ungraciously, as if she would have preferred to avoid the necessity. "This is my father, Mrs. Pendleton."

Pollyanna, smiling up at the white-haired, tired-looking man, knew at once that he was glad to see her, glad that in his daughter's self imposed exile, she had found it impossible to cut herself off from all companionship.

"I know I've stayed later than I should, Mr. Chalmers," Pollyanna said, "or you wouldn't be here. But I'm glad I did, for I've been wanting to meet you for so long."

"Father is early tonight," Miss Chalmers interposed. And then rather reproachfully, "If you'd telephoned, I'd have sent Martin to meet you."

"That wasn't necessary," Mr. Chalmers answered. But as Pollyanna rose to take her departure, she saw his hand tighten on the back of his daughter's chair, gripping it till his knuckles were blue. Startled she looked up into his face but, whatever was responsible for the convulsive gesture, he had sufficient control of himself to smile pleasantly and say, "I hope we shall meet often, Mrs. Pendleton."

"That man is sick or worried," Pollyanna told

herself as she crossed the street. "I suppose he's worried all the time, poor dear, and it's wearing him out." And for a moment, her sympathy for Lorraine Chalmers was submerged in indignation against the girl whose selfish absorption in her own misfortune was breaking the hearts of two good men.

Pollyanna's intuition was soon to be proved correct. She had not been in the house half an hour when the telephone bell rang. "Mrs. Pendleton," said Miss Chalmers' anxious voice, "is any really good physician located near here?"

"Our doctor is just a few blocks away. We had him when Junior was so sick, and we like him immensely."

"What is his name, please? Father is really ill. I'm frightened about him."

"It's Dr. E. J. Dorchester. His telephone number—Or would you rather have me call him?"

"Oh, yes. Please call him and tell him to come immediately."

Dr. Dorchester could not come immediately, for the reason that he was not at home. The maid expected him in half an hour or less, but could give no information as to his present whereabouts. Pollyanna turned the children over to Nancy, with detailed instructions, and ran across the street. Ap-

parently Miss Chalmers had been on the watch, for she met her at the door, quite forgetful, Pollyanna noted approvingly, of her usual device of keeping her profile turned, so that the scarred cheek should not be seen.

Pollyanna hastily explained. "There's a Dr. Joyce in the neighborhood and several of my friends employ him. Shall I call him or wait for Dr. Dorchester?"

"I don't know what to do." Miss Chalmers' eyes were frightened. "I've never known father to be sick before."

"What kind of an attack is it?"

"He only said that he didn't feel well, and that he'd go directly to bed. But when I spoke of calling a doctor, he didn't object."

"Is he in pain?"

"He didn't say. Oh!" whispered Miss Chalmers, clutching Pollyanna's arm with shaking fingers, "What should I do if anything happened to father?"

Though anything but hard-hearted, Pollyanna felt encouraged. In her opinion there was a therapeutic value, for Miss Chalmers at least, in being extremely anxious about somebody else. Instead of belittling her occasion for alarm she

said, "I'll telephone Dr. Dorchester again, and then, if he hasn't come, I'll telephone Dr. Joyce."

But, as it happened, the doctor had come in a little earlier than he had been expected, and was already on his way. Indeed, Pollyanna had hardly rung off before his car was at the curb. Miss Chalmers caught Pollyanna's hand as she saw the energetic figure swinging up the walk. "Don't go," she pleaded unexpectedly, and Pollyanna answered, "Of course not."

Jimmy would soon be coming home, if he were not there already, and when Jimmy reached home and did not find Pollyanna, his demeanor was equally suggestive of a homeless cat and an orphan child. But, whether Mr. Chalmers were seriously ill or not, Pollyanna knew her opportunity had come.

She was as much in the dark as ever, as far as Mr. Chalmers was concerned, when the doctor left. "Better keep him in bed tomorrow," he told Miss Chalmers. "I'll run in some time in the forenoon." Pollyanna knew from past experience that it would not do to count too much on that casual manner of his, nor on the cheeriness of his goodnight.

The trim maid stood in the background waiting, and Pollyanna guessed what was in her mind.

"Now that's attended to, you must eat a good dinner," she told Miss Chalmers.

"I couldn't eat a mouthful."

"You must. I hope your father isn't going to be ill, but there is a chance that you will need all your strength. You must eat regularly, whether you want it or not."

"I don't suppose you—Of course not—"

It was hardly an invitation, but Pollyanna accepted it. "I told Nancy to have dinner at the usual hour whether I was back or not, so I'll stay and keep you company."

It was a perfect little family dinner, perfectly served, but neither woman did it justice. Miss Chalmers sent away her plate barely touched, and Pollyanna was too engrossed by her efforts to be entertaining to think much of what she was eating. When Miss Chalmers laughed faintly at the story of one of Junior's pranks, or smiled over one of Judy's quaint speeches, Pollyanna felt positively exhilarated, and talked faster than ever.

She stayed for an hour or so after dinner, during which time Miss Chalmers made several tiptoe visits to her father's room, and came back with the word that he seemed to be asleep. At nine o'clock Pollyanna announced that she must go. She felt as if she had been absent from home for a long, long

time. Had the baby fretted? Had Junior been good? Would Jimmy be getting cross? But as she moved toward the door, she turned to say, "Of course if you should want me at any time, you'll telephone?"

The tears dimmed Miss Chalmers' blue eyes. "Mrs Pendleton, I can't begin to tell you how I appreciate your kindness."

Pollyanna had always believed in striking while the iron was hot. "I wonder if you couldn't bring yourself to call me by my first name," she said. "It's rather long—Pollyanna—but you won't mind when you're used to it."

"Then you'll have to reciprocate. My name's Lorraine."

"Oh, I'd love to call you Lorraine. It's a beautiful name, I think." Pollyanna looked at her neighbor, wondering if she dared, but apparently the same thought had occurred to both simultaneously. Lorraine Chalmers bent her fair head, and left a kiss on Pollyanna's lips, a tear upon her cheek.

Pollyanna rushed home, her mood so eager that her feet lagged behind, though she ran all the way. She fully expected to hurl herself into Jimmy's arms, and tell him the tremendous news before he had time to start scolding, but when she dashed into the living-room, she forgot Jimmy completely.

Franklin Lindsay was ensconced in the biggest arm chair, and it was evident that the two had fallen into one of those periods of silence so abhorrent to the feminine mind, though apparently quite satisfactory to men who find they have nothing particular to say.

Lindsay's face was anxious. Clearly he knew of Mr. Chalmers' illness. Pollyanna was across the room before he could rise to his feet.

"Don't look so worried," she begged. "I don't believe Mr. Chalmers is going to be so very sick. And at last I've really made a start with Lorraine."

CHAPTER IX

THE GIRL IN THE BLACK HAT

Mr. Chalmers' attack did not prove serious. He remained at home for a week, adapting himself to the role of invalid more gracefully than is usual with his sex, and Pollyanna was in and out of the house every day, each of her visits making a sunshiny splash in the twenty-four hours. Her native modesty did not blind her to the fact that Mr. Chalmers had taken an immense fancy to her, and she shamelessly boasted of her conquest to Jimmy, who only grinned, accepting Mr. Chalmers' subjugation as a tribute to his own excellent taste.

Franklin Lindsay was so excited over the progress Pollyanna was making that he telephoned her every day, and called nearly as often, begging her on each occasion, to let him know if he were making a nuisance of himself. And it seemed that others were impressed by the frequency of his visits, for the day after the doctor pronounced Mr. Chalmers well enough to resume his trips to the city, Lorraine said to Pollyanna, "You mustn't feel that you are

under obligation to waste time on me, now that father is all right again. I can't imagine how you're able to spare people outside your home the least bit of attention—you have so much company."

"Company! Why, I never thought we had a great deal."

"I don't mean formal entertaining, of course. But, if I didn't know to the contrary, there's one man I'd take to be a regular boarder."

Pollyanna, feigning to bestow her attention on a bit of embroidery on the baby's frock, observed the speaker from the corner of her eye. Lorraine's manner was elaborately casual, yet Pollyanna suspected that her remark had been made with a deliberate purpose. Could it be that this self-contained young woman was like the average love-sick girl, in wishing to talk about her lover, even though she had parted from him forever. Pollyanna considered the experiment worth trying.

"Oh, you must mean Franklin Lindsay," she said, as casually as Lorraine herself had spoken. "He's one of Jimmy's business associates, you know, and one of his best friends, too. We're all devoted to him, from Nancy down. When you keep only one servant," Pollyanna explained ingenuously, "it's quite important that a frequent visitor should be on good terms with her."

"Have you known him long?"

"Ever since we came here to live. But he went west soon after, so that it's only during the last few months that we've been so intimate. He's very fond of children. If he wasn't, he'd give Elsinore Terrace a wide berth."

"I fancy you've omitted the chief attraction. It's fortunate, isn't it, that Mr. Pendleton isn't inclined to be jealous?"

This sounded promising. If love is blind, jealousy is Argus-eyed, and Pollyanna wondered if her neighbor had observed some trifle to which her secret bitterness had given an absurd interpretation. "No, Jimmy's not inclined to be jealous," her thoughts ran. "I wonder if *you* are."

Verbally she was more discreet. "My husband and I have known each other too long for any folly of that sort. There has never been anyone else for either of us. If Frank enjoys his friendship with me, nobody could be gladder than Jimmy. You see we both feel so sorry for him."

"Sorry? Why? Or perhaps I shouldn't ask."

Caution was necessary, Pollyanna realized, and she must achieve it while maintaining an air of perfect frankness. She met Lorraine's questioning glance with level eyes.

"We both feel that Frank must have had some

great trouble. When we first knew him, we thought he was shy and retiring, but we know now it's not that. We think he must have met with some heart-breaking disappointment. He's too fine to let it embitter him, but it's changed him, I'm sure."

"Very likely a love affair," conjectured Lorraine. "If it's that, he'll get over it soon."

Pollyanna dropped her embroidery. "How can you say a thing like that about a perfect stranger?"

"I know men, my dear. As a rule a woman's complexion and a man's devotion have about the same duration."

Pollyanna's laughter was the more impressive because spontaneous. "How perfectly absurd," she gasped when she recovered her breath. "Pretty sylph-like girls turn into dumpy, middle-aged women, and their husbands never discover that they aren't as beautiful as when they courted them. Of course a great deal of so-called love is no more spiritual than hunger and thirst. As soon as it's satisfied, it's over. But real love outlasts everything in the world."

"Your experience must have been exceptional."

"Oh, I've lived around quite a bit," said Pollyanna. "And in all sorts of places, from country towns to great cities, and I keep my eyes open. I can't speak for the society crowd, of course, though

I suspect that even there the follies of the few are charged up to the class; but, anyway, with the sort of people I know, love is the most enduring thing there is. It outlasts health and wealth and beauty and strength—yes, and even life itself."

There was a moment's silence and then rather hurriedly Lorraine began to speak of a sensational item in the morning paper. Pollyanna, accepting the change of topic without protest, again wondered why they had been talking over Franklin Lindsay. There were several possible explanations. It might have been for the meagre satisfaction of discussing him with someone who had seen him the night before, for starving love can feed on very little. Jealousy might have inspired the topic, and possibly without Lorraine's realizing it. And there was a chance that she only wished to find out whether her new friend was aware that Lindsay and herself had once been all but affianced lovers. If the latter were the case, Pollyanna flattered herself that Lorraine could have no inkling of the extent of Lindsay's confidences.

Whatever Lorraine's motive, Pollyanna chose to interpret her action as a favorable augury. When Frank called her up that afternoon she informed him that she had good news for him.

"Bless you for the angel you are," the young man

said feelingly. "Do I dare drop in this evening, after being there last night?"

"Why, come out to dinner. It's only warmed-over pot roast, but you won't mind."

"I adore warmed-over pot roast, but I'm not going to take dinner with you again till you've dined with me. Listen, I discovered a new eating place last week—first-class table—and we can reach it in about an hour from your house. Let's drive over after the kids are abed, and take dinner there."

Pollyanna protested, insisting that, since her invitation was first, it should not be shouldered aside by a later comer, but she ended by accepting for Jimmy and herself. She had already expressed to Jimmy the wish that Frank's gratitude would not take the form of inviting them to all sorts of things, concerts in the city, dinner at his club, long drives with a late supper at some wayside hostelry, whose entertainment he had sampled. But Jimmy was inclined to make light of her qualms.

"As long as you invite him to dinner two or three times a week, he naturally wants to do his share. I wouldn't bother about the expense, for it doesn't mean anything to him. Frank isn't dependent on his salary, you know. He could live on his income if he didn't earn a cent."

This particular evening, Lindsay drove Jimmy

out from the city, and waited while Pollyanna superintended the children's supper and put the baby to bed. Junior and Judy were given permission to sit up till their usual bed-time, provided they gave Nancy no trouble. And Nancy, beaming as always, when some special pleasure came Pollyanna's way, was ready to vouch for the good behavior of her charges.

"Sakes alive, Miss Pollyanna, these children ain't a-goin' to be a mite o' trouble. If Jiggs was as well-behaved as them, you and me could put on our best dresses every afternoon, and jest set around till 'twas time to get supper."

Pollyanna enjoyed the drive in the luxurious car. She sat in front beside Lindsay, and Jimmy, in the back seat, found her glowing face more attractive than the scenery. It fretted him, that when Pollyanna took such delight in motoring, he had not been able to afford a car, and throughout the drive his mind was busy with a mathematical problem presenting an irresistible lure to the young men of his generation, how to provide for a wife and family, put away something for the inevitable rainy day, and still have enough for the purchase and upkeep of a car.

As if she divined his thoughts, Pollyanna turned her head. "Jimmy, I believe I'm glad we don't

have an automobile of our own. I'd hate to get so accustomed to this wonderful sensation that it wouldn't give me a thrill."

Jimmy, interrupted in his teasing calculations, laughed joyously. "Then, when I buy a car, as I surely shall one of these days, you'll be broken-hearted, I suppose."

"Oh, I'll try to reconcile myself to the situation," Pollyanna replied demurely, but her eyes danced as if she saw the car waiting just beyond the bend in the road.

The hotel of which Lindsay had formed so favorable an impression, was a little further than he had thought, and it was past eight o'clock when they seated themselves at the round table, their appetites sharpened by delay. For a time Pollyanna was too absorbed in ordering her dinner to give any attention to the other diners, for she enjoyed a good meal as whole-heartedly as she enjoyed good music, and thought no less of herself on that account. But, when the waiter had departed with the order, her eyes travelled about the room in search of entertainment. Because of her unfailing interest in her kind, there was never any danger that Pollyanna would be bored, not while there were people to look at.

At a table, in an alcove near them, sat a man and a

pretty girl, such a pretty girl that Pollyanna's eyes, having made the circuit of the room, came back to rest upon her as the object, within her range of vision, most deserving of prolonged scrutiny. She wore a black hat, rather large for the mode, which accentuated the piquant charm of her face. But it was not only the girl's beauty which drew Pollyanna's attention. She was haunted by the impression that she had seen her before.

It was just as the fruit cup was set before her that she remembered. She could hardly wait for the man who was serving them to take his departure, in her impatience to let her companions into her secret.

"Frank and Jimmy, I want you to take a look at the girl at the alcove table. Don't look both together and right away, so everyone will know I told you to, but after a minute or two, take a casual glance."

"I'll give Frank the first chance," Jimmy said nobly. "Looking at pretty girls isn't going to do me any good."

"Oh, yes, it will, Jimmy. She's so pretty that it's like looking at a rose garden or something like that, isn't it, Frank?"

Lindsay had improved Jimmy's generous permission, by making a leisurely survey of the room,

ending with the alcove table. "Do you mean the girl with the big black hat?" he asked, an odd restraint in his voice.

"Yes, isn't she perfect?"

"She's certainly pretty."

"Now, Jimmy, it is your turn. Wait a minute, so it will seem quite unpremeditated, then take a good look."

"I'll try not to be impulsive," scoffed Jimmy, but after a suitable interval, he gave his attention to the girl in the black hat, and showed more than Lindsay's enthusiasm. "Some looker, all right."

"Now listen, both of you. That's Paula Merrill."

"Do you mean," asked Lindsay, his manner almost startled, "that you know her?"

"Yes-no; I don't know her exactly, but I'm going to. I saw her just once before so at first I couldn't locate her. Isn't it a horrid feeling, when a face is perfectly familiar, but you can't fit it with anything that belongs to it?"

"But who is she?" demanded Jimmy. "Paula Merrill doesn't mean anything in my young life."

"Why, she's James Carew's secretary. Don't you remember I told you I met her going out the door, just as I was coming in, and she was so pretty I wanted to watch her out of sight, instead of ringing the bell."

"You have such a wealth of enthusiasm, dear, that sometimes I get a little mixed, but I'll admit that this is a case to justify superlatives. Old James has better taste than I thought."

Lindsay looked over at the alcove table, focusing his gaze, not on the girl in the black hat, but on her escort. After a moment the man who was the object of his scrutiny turned to give an order, and Lindsay nodded, as if some unspoken question had been answered.

"If you're interested in that girl," he said, addressing Pollyanna, "You'd better advise her to be more particular about her company."

Pollyanna put down her spoon. "Why, do you know the man?"

"I'm sorry to say I do. Those who have that bad luck are very likely to look the other way when he comes along. In the first place, he's an unmitigated bounder, and, in the second place, he's a great deal worse than that. In fact, if he wasn't a wizard at covering his tracks, he'd have been locked up long ago. His name is Fox, and it fits."

"Oh, dear!" Pollyanna sighed. "She's so young and pretty, she couldn't very well be sensible into the bargain. Probably she hasn't any idea what sort of man he is."

"If she hasn't, she's a poor judge of character.

Fox hides his tracks but not his rottenness. He can't talk to you five minutes without showing himself up for his yellow worst. Came near getting kicked out of the club a year or two ago, and they say he's been a little more cautious since. But he's mighty poor company for any woman who has a reputation to lose."

The two under discussion had finished their meal. They had left the table and were on their way to the door, and the girl passed so close to Pollyanna that she could have touched her arm. Pollyanna's eyes went to the man of whom Lindsay was speaking with such unwonted severity. Not bad looking in a cheap sort of way; black hair oiled back from his forehead, giving the impression of a head roofed with polished sheet iron; the nose of a movie star; but loose lips, twitching continually into meaningless smiles; shifting eyes; a chin whose heaviness, like the girth of a fat man, suggested weakness rather than strength. Pollyanna's instinct confirmed all that Lindsay had said, and, as the meal progressed, her thoughts kept darting ahead to a call on Sadie in the near future, when the two of them could plan some way to put Paula Merrill on her guard against her undesirable admirer.

CHAPTER X

THE MENAGERIE GROWS

With the self-imposed responsibility of bringing Lorraine Chalmers back to a normal viewpoint never long absent from her thoughts, and with an uneasy conviction that all was not well with James Carew's pretty secretary, it seemed to Pollyanna that she had quite enough on her mind, if the six-toed cat had not complicated things. The animal in question, easily recognized by her queer, clumsy feet, appeared on Elsinore Terrace without warning, and at once made it plain that she had no intention of taking her departure.

Just why the six-toed cat should have favored the Pendleton residence above any other along the Terrace, was something Pollyanna could not understand. From her point of view, almost any other house was preferable for the six-toed cat's obvious purpose, since few had either a cat or a dog as a permanent inmate, and no other boasted both.

The six-toed cat was evidently gifted with peculiar insight, and recognized in the Pendleton

family that softness of heart on which all creatures, two-footed and four-footed alike, instinctively trade. She must also have seen through Jiggs' pretensions to reckless courage, and discovered the caution underlying his air of indifference to consequences. And the fact that Sin had a prior claim on the Pendleton milk-bottles and table-scraps, apparently counted as little with the six-toed cat as if she had been human.

Having selected her residence, she camped on the front porch, or took up her stand near the kitchen door, awaiting her opportunity to enter. Violent methods would undoubtedly have driven her off, but the Pendletons were constitutionally incapable of using such measures, as the six-toed cat seemingly knew. Pollyanna "shooed" her gently away some twenty times a day, with an air of appealing to her better nature, but the six-toed cat only slipped through the hedge into the Hunt's back yard, or, if Pollyanna were especially vehement, crossed the street and hid behind the Chalmers' shrubbery, placidly awaiting her opportunity to return.

With time and patience most things are possible. The six-toed cat gained an entrance at last. Whether she stole past the children when they were called in from their play at bed-time, or whether Nancy admitted her, when putting out the milk-

bottles the last thing at night, no one could say. But one morning, Junior, rushing half-dressed into the play-room, in search of his beloved pocket-knife, made a discovery which resulted in a series of shouts.

"Moth-er! Moth-er-rr! Dad-dy! Come qui-ck-k-k!"

The Pendleton family, including Nancy, arrived in short order. In the corner of the play-room lay the six-toed cat, and close to her snuggled a number of shapeless, blind little creatures, emitting faint squeaks, as their mother's movements interrupted breakfast.

The six-toed cat, while on her guard against surprises, was clearly of the opinion that her latest achievement had put the world in her debt. She purred loudly and rolled on her side, the better to display the charms of her family. Junior, clutching his mother's sleeve, gasped as the squirming mass was brought into view. "They—they—I guess there's 'most a hundred of 'em, mother. What does she want of so many?"

It was hard work getting the Pendleton family dressed. Breakfast had little attraction to compare with the exhibition in the corner of the play-room. And when, at last, the places at the dining-table

were filled, the conversation concerned itself solely with the family upstairs.

"We'll have to think up names for that nice mother kitty and her little kitties," Judy announced. "I thing Beauty's a nice name for her."

"What do you say to Smudge?" asked Jimmy. As a matter of fact, the name Beauty was painfully inappropriate. Whatever virtues the six-toed cat possessed, they were not associated with corresponding graces of person. All the colors peculiar to the cat tribe appeared in her rough, neglected coat, and across her nose ran a diagonal splotch of black, suggesting contact with smut, so that Jimmy's choice of a name seemed eminently suitable.

"We could name three of the kitties 'Tit, Tiny and Tittens'," suggested Junior. "And then we could name one for Aunt Ruth, an' one for Uncle John, an' one for Aunt Sadie, an' one—"

Pollyanna saw it was time to interrupt. "I think we had better leave the naming of the kittens to the people who will bring them up. You see we can't keep them."

A wail arose. Junior and Judy at once lost all interest in breakfast. "Why, mother?" demanded Junior, first to find his voice. "Why can't we keep 'em?"

"Well you see we already have a cat and a dog."

"But you had Judy and me when Ruth came, and you kept her."

Jimmy chuckled. Jimmy had the utmost admiration for his son's logical faculty, surprisingly developed for one of his tender years.

"We don't want to be selfish," Pollyanna said, evading the point. "Some people have no cats at all, and we have our nice Sin."

"But Sin never has any babies, an' they're so c-cunning," exclaimed Judy, on the verge of tears.

As a matter of fact, the whole household was disturbed. Even the six-toed cat lost some of her complacency when Pollyanna removed her family from the play-room to a corner of the laundry, although a heaping plate of food awaited her in her new quarters. Nancy shook her head, as she saw the remnants of her pot-roast disappear.

"Feed her high like that, Miss Pollyanna, an' we'll never get rid of her."

"We can't starve the poor thing, Nancy, not while she has all those babies to feed."

Nancy eyed the family darkly. "Cats that can get into a house locked up for the night, ain't a-goin' to starve, Miss Pollyanna. Cats have ways of gettin' what they want 'specially them six-toed kind. They're uncanny, they are, they are."

In spite of Pollyanna's native optimism, when

she came to consider the liklihood that any of her friends and acquaintances would be ready to adopt a cat with a family of seven kittens, she was forced to admit that the prospects were hardly bright. But for once, reality proved better than her hopes. Throughout the day the children of the neighborhood made pilgrimages to the laundry, and admired the recent additions to the world's population. And in the middle of the afternoon, Anne McGill made her appearance.

"Pollyanna, I hear there is an addition to your menagerie."

"Isn't it awful?" Pollyanna spoke with unwonted dolefulness. "I simply can't have nine cats in the house."

"Would you like to have me take eight of them off your hands?"

"Anne, you can't mean it! It's too good to be true."

"I believe I *do* mean it, though I'm astonished at myself. But Philip is simply crazy about those kittens. He said almost tearfully that Junior had Jiggs and Sin, and he hadn't any pets but the goldfish. I adore goldfish myself, but in comparison with cats and dogs, I must admit they're rather unresponsive. And if a family of kittens will make the child really happy— Don't you see—"

"I see you're an angel," Pollyanna cried. "And now I've one more favor to ask. Do take them away before the children get to feel that they're a fixture, and are heart-broken over losing them."

Mrs. McGill nodded. Philip was summoned, and sent for a large market basket. A suitable bed was made in the basket, and the infant family transferred, *en masse*. The six-toed cat was clearly suspicious. She mewed loudly.

"She don't want to go, mother," Judy quavered. "She wants to stay here with us."

"She doesn't understand. She'll be very happy at Philip's, and you can go over to see her every day."

Despite this hopeful prophecy, the departure was a melancholy occasion. Judy wept loudly and Junior's masculine self-control was not quite equal to the test. The six-toed cat, in Philip's arms, howled desperately. Mrs. McGill, carrying the basket of kittens, hurried off, informing Pollyanna over her shoulder, that she understood the emotions of a kidnapper. Jiggs and Sin alone showed relief. Sin, who apparently realized that the presence of the six-toed cat and her family put him on the defensive, became extremely playful all at once, while Jiggs, who had chafed over taking second place in the family interest, even for half a day, went through

the house like a whirlwind, overturning a small table and breaking a vase.

The respite was brief. Pollyanna was wakened the next morning by Nancy's voice at her bed-room door.

"Miss Pollyanna, do come down stairs as quick as you can."

Pollyanna donned bath robe and slippers, and hurried down the back stairs. Nancy had the outside door open, and stood gazing with an expression of horror on a domestic scene on the kitchen steps. The six-toed cat was stretched upon the door mat, nursing her seven kittens, and purring beatifically.

"Ain't that something?" Nancy demanded. "An' you know, Miss Pollyanna, if the children see those kittens back, it'll be worse lettin' 'em go the second time than it was the first."

"You're right," Pollyanna agreed. "Put them in a basket Nancy, and take them back again. Even if breakfast is late, we must get them away before the children come down."

Even then she failed to reckon on the disposition of the six-toed cat. Had she been human, she would undoubtedly have surmounted every obstacle and become a captain of industry. The afternoon of the day when she and her family had been returned to the McGill establishment, Pollyanna over-

heard Junior expressing himself in the most intemperate terms.

"You mean, mizzable ole cannibal! I've a good mind to cut your head off."

Junior's voice was hoarse with feeling. Clearly he was not in play. Pollyanna hurried to the scene, and found him at the head of the stairs, barring the way of a determined cat. She stood a few steps below him, her eyes gleaming like twin moons, while from her jaws dangled the limp body of a kitten.

Junior rushed to his mother with his horrifying story. "Mother, she's killed that poor little kitten. She's biting off his head."

"Oh, no, dear! I don't think the kitten is hurt. That is the way cats carry their babies."

Much to Junior's relief, the kitten deposited in a corner of the playroom rug, began to mew loudly. The six-toed cat, knowing nothing of the modern theory that infants should be fed at stated times, and not when they happen to cry, prostrated herself upon the rug, and silenced her offspring effectually. And Pollyanna gazing at the contented pair, shook her head.

"You'll have to take the baby back, Junior. Don't let Judy see him if you can help it. She's so little she might make a fuss." She added reproachfully, "you're an ungrateful animal, Smudge. To think,

when Mrs. McGill is ready to give you a nice home, you won't stay in it."

For a week the combined intelligence of the Pendleton and McGill families was pitted vainly against the determination of the six-toed cat. Mrs. McGill fed her on the fat of the land, in an unavailing effort to win her affection and confidence. The six-toed cat ate whatever was placed before her, and watched her opportunity to escape. And the opportunities were plentiful. Daily Philip McGill came to the Pendleton's in search of a missing cat or kitten. Daily Junior trotted over to the McGill's, carrying a squalling infant, while a disapproving mother paced at his side.

The crisis came one night when the six-toed cat squeezed her way through a laundry window, left ajar for the sake of air, and carried several of her off-spring to the Pendleton's front porch, where she took her choice of an array of rustic chairs. After removing three of her family to their new quarters, she either lost count, or decided that three was a satisfactory family. She settled down for the night, and in the course of time, the abandoned quartet in the McGill laundry awoke, and howled so lustily that Mrs. McGill came down to see what was wrong. She spent the remainder of the night trying to quiet

the outraged infants, and in the morning, sought Pollyanna.

"Oh, good morning, Anne." Pollyanna's tone was anxious. "I was just coming over. Smudge and three of the kittens are here. Did she lose the others on the way?"

"The others are safe at home, but, Pollyanna—" Mrs. McGill paused and sighed heavily. "I don't accuse you of being an Indian giver, but I wish you were. If only you took back what you gave, it would save me the trouble of returning it."

"I don't blame you a bit." Pollyanna needed no explanation. "Who would have dreamed she would act this way?"

"I took Smudge and her family for Philip's sake," Mrs. McGill continued. "And the poor child has hardly had a happy minute since. It's a new shock every time he finds that she has vanished, with one or more of the kittens. It's taught him to appreciate the goldfish. At least they don't trouble us by running off to the neighbors."

"Poor Philip! Perhaps, Anne," said Pollyanna, brightening. "If I bring up Smudge's family, you'll take one of the kittens when it's old enough."

"If you'll vouch for its having a different disposition from its mother."

Pollyanna audaciously agreed to provide a kitten

possessing none of the maternal characteristics, and sent Junior for the abandoned remnant of Smudge's family. The six-toed cat, settled in a corner of the Pendleton laundry, sang a pæan of triumph, in which, no doubt, her own persistence was duly eulogized. And Pollyanna, trying to appease an indignant Sin and a sulky Jiggs, little guessed that the saga of the six-toed cat was only beginning.

CHAPTER XI

WRONG NUMBER

WITH a sense of guilt, Pollyanna realized that more than a week had elapsed since her chance encounter with Paula Merrill, in company of which Frank Lindsay so strongly disapproved. Her plan to discuss the matter with Sadie, that between them they might find some way of helping the girl, should be put into effect promptly, she told herself, if it were to have the result she hoped for. Acting on the impulse of the moment, she whisked from her morning dress into a trim blue suit, and went downstairs to tell Nancy she was going to town.

"Never mind the cleaning, today, Nancy, just keep an eye on Ruth. I think I'll be home for luncheon."

"Now don't you go tearin' 'round, Miss Pollyanna, till you get a stitch in your side, an' come home all wore out. There ain't enough to do in this house today to keep one from putting on flesh. But I guess that six-toed cat will *worry* me thin," added Nancy, with a complete change of tone. "Of

all set beasts I ever see, she's the worst. Now she's had her way 'bout gettin' back here, she's made up her mind them kittens ain't a-goin' to be raised in a laundry. I wouldn't be surprised to find 'em on the side-board, or on top o' the piano, any day. She's capable of it, she is, she is."

Pollyanna laughed, kissed Ruth goodbye, warned Jiggs she should expect a favorable report of his conduct during her absence, and took the train to the city. She had been up for some hours, and was surprised to arrive at the Carews' while the baby's bath was in progress. A somewhat disheveled Sadie explained that the nurse had a cold, and had been sent home to recover, so that little Jamie should not contract her malady.

It was not the most opportune time for her mission, Pollyanna perceived, since Sadie was preoccupied with her own affairs. She bided her time, lent her skilled aid as required, and not till the baby was finding consolation for his recent ordeal in a frolic with the visitor, did she give the explanation for her early call. She was disappointed to find Sadie decidedly apathetic, inclined to look on the affair as none of her business.

"The fact that she is James' secretary doesn't give me any right to interfere in her personal affairs, Pollyanna. In fact I hardly know her."

"I don't mean it that way, Sadie. I thought she'd appreciate your being interested. She's so young," pleaded Pollyanna. "I don't look on it as interfering, to try to protect a young girl from an unprincipled man."

"The question isn't how you look on it, but how Miss Merrill will," replied Sadie, scoring, as Pollyanna ruefully acknowleged. "She has a very standoffish manner for a young girl. I do believe she could come to the house for years, without my feeling as if I really knew her."

Pollyanna, who could not imagine feeling a stranger to one who daily spent hours under her roof, looked at her friend rather helplessly. But, before either spoke again, there was a firm tread in the hall, and a slender figure appeared in the doorway.

"Mrs. Carew, Mr. Carew won't need me any more today. I'm to attend to an errand for him in town, and he told me to ask you if I could do anything for you at the same time."

Sadie hesitated perceptibly. "No," she said at length. "I don't think of anything." She turned toward Pollyanna. "This is James' secretary, Miss Merrill, Mrs. Pendleton."

Pollyanna extended a cordial hand. "I'm ever so glad to meet you," she smiled. "The first time I

saw you, I asked Mrs. Carew if anybody so decorative could be useful. She seemed to think that combination perfectly possible."

Miss Merrill looked surprised, though she showed no trace of embarassment. In fact her vague smile hardly suggested pleasure. Pollyanna reflected that so attractive a daughter of Eve must be accustomed to compliments, and was not likely to be thrilled by an expression of admiration from one of her own sex. Yet, in spite of the girl's unresponsiveness Pollyanna felt a rather absurd satisfaction in the fact that she had really met her. Uplifting humanity in the mass was an ideal that made small appeal to her. From her point of view, helpfulness was the immediate corollary of friendship.

Sadie's expression was critical as Miss Merrill went down the stairs, but she waited till the door had closed behind her, before she interpreted the look into words. "I don't know why you said that, Pollyanna. She's perfectly aware that she's pretty."

"Well, I thought she wouldn't mind hearing it again, and I wanted her to like me."

"Wanted her to like you?" repeated Sadie, and laughed aloud. "Oh, Pollyanna, you do say the most ridiculous things."

Pollyanna did not reply. She was thinking of her first meeting with Sadie, an over-worked, tempted,

unhappy girl, and of the transformation that had been wrought in her by the friendly aid of a generous and wealthy woman. Characteristically she ignored her own contribution to the metamorphosis. But for once, Sadie's memory was the better. She flushed hotly, and leaned forward to lay an affectionate hand on Pollyanna's knee.

"You do say funny things, but you're a darling, just the same. I, for one, should be thankful for your fondness for helping people. Now I'm going to stop finding fault with you and scold James."

Pollyanna smiled. "Sounds well, but you know you'll never do it."

"No, I don't suppose I shall. But it *is* provoking. We're invited to luncheon to meet that English dramatist who is making such a stir and, if Miss Merrill was in the house, she could keep an eye on the baby. Now the cook will have to do it, and she's always upset if she's asked to do anything outside her regular work."

"Reminds me of what I used to hear people say back in Beldingsville days," laughed Pollyanna. "'One boy's a boy, two boys are half a boy, and three boys are no boy at all.' Since I have only Nancy, she's never upset, no matter what she's asked to do."

"Oh well, Nancy's not a servant. She's a treasure."

"And now about the baby," Pollyanna went on, "I have a little shopping to do, but it won't take long. When I finish, I'll come back here and stay with Jamie Junior, while you and James take in the luncheon. I'll telephone Nancy I won't be home quite as early as I expected."

Sadie's face lighted up as Pollyanna outlined her plan, and then clouded over. She protested that she would not think of falling in with such a preposterous idea, that Pollyanna, with three children of her own, had quite enough to do without acting as nurse-maid for other people's babies. At this point, Pollyanna interrupted effectively.

"Don't waste your breath, because it's all settled. Tell me when you want to leave, and I'll be back at least fifteen minutes earlier."

Pollyanna was as good as her word. In fact she was back in time to arrange James' tie for him, and to assist Sadie in donning a slip-over dress, which required an almost mathematical nicety of adjustment, in order to get it on at all. Then she cut short their thanks, hurrying them off on the pretext that they were going to be late, and settled down to enjoy the afternoon. At home there was always a button to be sewed on, a pair of hands to be

washed, a letter to write, a telephone call to answer, something to fill every second. It gave her a feeling of luxury to make herself comfortable in the big arm chair, and open a magazine containing one of James' short stories. Jamie, on the rug beside her, patiently constructing block castles, which invariably became top-heavy and toppled over at the builder's feet. Son of a temperamental father and an over-anxious mother, Jamie was the most placid of babies. When his castles collapsed, he giggled disapprovingly, and began all over again.

"We won't be gone much over two hours," Sadie had said, kissing her goodbye with unwonted affection. "You're a perfect dear, Pollyanna, and some day I'll do as much for you." And Pollyanna had accepted the promise as gratefully as if there were the slightest prospect of its ever being carried out. Sadie was the typical hen with one chicken, always needing help, never able to give it.

She had read only a page of James' story, which she wanted very much to like as she had made herself so disagreeable over "Growing Pains," when the telephone bell interrupted her. Fearing that answering the telephone might be one of the things to which Sadie's temperamental cook objected, Pollyanna jumped briskly to her feet, and went to answer it herself. A man's voice replied to her

interrogative, "Hello," and said, as she thought, "Is this you, Polly?"

Now while Pollyanna made a practise of insisting on all four syllables of her unusual name, sometimes Jimmy, in a teasing mood, addressed her as Polly. And, while this did not sound exactly like Jimmy's voice, since he was the only person who ever called her Polly, and the only man who knew her present whereabouts, she answered unhesitatingly, "Yes."

"Anybody around?" was the next question.

"No," said Pollyanna, wondering.

"I've been thinking things over. I'm afraid we'd better call off that date for tonight."

Pollyanna was a little surprised, since the plan for the evening was Jimmy's own. But, after being away all day, she was very well satisfied to spend the evening quietly at home.

"Not sore, are you, girlie?"

Pollyanna could not believe her ears. "What's that?" she exclaimed.

"Don't you see we've got to be a little careful. That brute of a Lindsay recognized me last week, I'm sure, and we can't take any chances. Perhaps next week—"

"Wait," cried Pollyanna, coming to her senses. "Who is this speaking?"

The silence was so prolonged as to suggest that

she had been disconnected. She repeated her question, and though it was not answered, the voice came back with another inquiry, "What is your number?"

Pollyanna gave it promptly, and the voice became apologetic. "Sorry; wrong number." The receiver at the other end was hastily hung up. As Pollyanna followed suit, she was convinced that the number was right, it was only the girl that was wrong. She had remembered that Miss Merrill's name was Paula, and the reference to Lindsay seemed sufficient proof that the speaker was the man who had been Miss Merrill's escort, and whom Franklin Lindsay had denounced so unsparingly.

"The idea of my thinking it was Jimmy speaking," exclaimed Pollyanna, in a tone of extreme disgust. "Such a horrid man probably has a horrid voice. But, when I thought he said Polly, I didn't pay attention to anything else."

She tried to go on with her reading, but James' story, exciting as it was, failed to hold her attention. The drama in real life which might so easily turn out a tragedy, dominated her thoughts. She racked her brains, trying to devise some way of warning Paula Merrill, and found herself oppressed by an unwonted sense of helplessness. If only Sadie took more interest in the girl, or at least, felt more responsible for her, so young, so pretty, so defense-

less—the more defenseless because of her assumption of sophistication. Pollyanna's heart ached over her.

Sadie and James came back and found her deep in thought, while at her feet little Jamie constructed a leaning tower, inclined at a more perilous angle than its famous prototype at Pisa. She roused herself to ask what they thought of the visiting dramatist, who had been given headlines in all the newspapers, chiefly, it appeared, because of his caustic criticism of everything American.

When they had answered her questions, Sadie had one of her own to ask. "Well, Pollyanna, how did you like the story?" And something in her manner betrayed that Pollyanna's criticism of "Growing Pains" was still rankling.

Pollyanna's native tact came to her aid. "Sadie, would you mind my taking it home, so Jimmy and I can read it together? We both want to read everything James writes, and we both enjoy it so much better that way."

"Why, of course," said Sadie. "Keep the magazine, if you like. We have several extra copies."

On her way back to her home and her babies and her husband, Pollyanna's spirits rose. Her characteristic certainty that things would come out all right, reasserted itself, and she found consolation

in the thought that Mr. Fox would probably spend a very uncomfortable evening. "If he was nervous before, he's probably tearing his hair now, when he remembers his indiscreet confidence over the telephone," thought Pollyanna. "And the worse he feels, the gladder I am."

CHAPTER XII

A CHASE AND A CAPTURE

ALTHOUGH the mysterious telephone conversation was much in her mind, Pollyanna discussed it with only two people, Jimmy and Franklin Lindsay. In the case of the latter her confidence was incomplete, as she suppressed the item that he had been referred to as a brute. Both men agreed that the speaker could be no other than Fox, and both shared Pollyanna's satisfaction in picturing his dismay, as he realized the extent of his self-betrayal.

"If only your affections weren't engaged," Pollyanna told Lindsay, "we could be rid of Mr. Fox in no time. I'd invite Miss Merrill here for the week-end, and have you drop in for dinner. Of course she'd fall in love with you at once, and the Fox episode would end painlessly."

"And what about me?" asked Lindsay, with a marked absence of enthusiasm.

"You'd be envied by all men for having such a pretty wife."

"But I'm afraid I couldn't fall in love with a lady of such execrable taste."

"Oh, your feelings wouldn't matter, Frank," Jimmy exclaimed hastily. "All these match-makers consider is making a match. They'd pair off the human race as Noah did the animals for the ark, and never stop to ask how the poor devils liked it."

"I don't believe it," protested Pollyanna's champion. "Your wife has taken my case in hand because she has my happiness at heart. If I am ever married," he added rather hopelessly, "I'll owe it all to her."

"You'll be married all right, if you leave it to her, my dear chap," Jimmy assured him. "If she can't marry you to one girl, she'll marry you to another. I know her of old, and of all the match-makers she's the most ruthless."

Lindsay's evident dejection was due to the fact that for several days even Pollyanna's optimism had been unequal to extracting anything encouraging from the news she had to impart. It was noticeable that Lorraine, after making a slight advance toward friendliness, invariably underwent a reaction. Her gratitude to Pollyanna at the time of her father's illness, had swept her into an attitude of affectionate intimacy from which she later recoiled. For several days Pollyanna had been unable to see her, and the multiplicity of excuses offered would have awakened suspicion in the most guileless nature. While Polly-

anna's courage was proof against these set-backs, Lindsay, more readily depressed as he had more at stake, relapsed during each period of retroaction, into abysmal gloom.

After two weeks the situation was as unsatisfactory as ever. When Pollyanna had at length seen Lorraine, she had found her uncommunicative and unresponsive, apparently back at the beginning of their acquaintance. Even when she made discreet use of Franklin Lindsay as conversational bait, referring casually to something he had said or done, she elicited little response from the grimly reticent young woman. Frank's depression had increased with each unfavorable report, and he drove out to his friend's one Saturday evening, appealing to them to take pity on him.

"I realize that for cheerful companionship I'm in a class with undertakers and sich, but if my society is hard on you people, just think how much worse it is for me. Don't you want to go for a drive? This perfect weather won't last forever."

The children were asleep, and Pollyanna ran for her wraps without the formality of an acceptance. It was about an hour later when, thanks to the combined efforts of Jimmy and herself, Lindsay's mood had become more normal that they drove past a gaudy moving-picture theatre, the film of the eve-

ning featuring a famous dog. Pollyanna turned her head for a longer view of the posters.

"It's that wonderful dog we were reading about the other day, Jimmy," she said over her shoulder. "I've always wanted to see that animal, and make up my mind whether he is any more remarkable than Jiggs."

The car turned sharply to the left and glided up to the curb. "Couldn't be a better time to settle that important question," Lindsay laughed.

"Isn't it too late?"

"It's only half-past nine, and you won't have to start Jim off early tomorrow, you know."

"That question was purely rhetorical," explained Jimmy from the rear. "If you had agreed that it was late, she would have reminded you reproachfully, that this is Saturday night."

The theatre was well filled, and they had a little difficulty in finding three seats together. Then with what Jimmy called "Pollyanna's luck," a group near them rose as they stood hesitating in the aisle, and filed out, leaving a row of desirable seats empty. The film was half run when they took their places, and they saw it through, and then saw it all over again. Pollyanna insisting that this was necessary, if she was to get the proper sequence of events. It was nearly twelve o'clock when for the second time

they saw canine justice executed on an evil doer, and, with the rest of the audience, made their way to the street. Lindsay's car was parked at some distance, and as they made their slow progress through the surging crowd, Pollyanna drew a comparison between Jiggs and the leading actor of the drama they had just witnessed, not altogether to the disadvantage of the former.

"This will show you how intelligent he is. The other day he bit the blossoms off those chrysanthemums I've been so proud of—"

"That may be a mark of intelligence," said Jimmy. "But it never would have occurred to me."

"I haven't got to the point yet. I told Nancy I was going to whip him. I said it in my ordinary tone of voice, and then I called Jiggs, in order to carry out my intention. But though I called and called, he didn't come. I hunted all over the house for him, and at last I found him under Junior's bed. I got down on my knees and coaxed him to come out, but he only looked at me with those enormous eyes, and then—Oh Jimmy!"

The break in the continuity of Pollyanna's thoughts was unmistakable. She caught Jimmy's arm, and stood staring down the road her eyes following a car that had shot past them. "What is it?" chorused the two men.

"It was Paula Merrill in that car. I'd know her profile in a million."

"I believe it's Fox' car," exclaimed Lindsay. "It's a foreign make. You don't see many of them." He turned to Pollyanna with a smile that left it uncertain whether he was jesting or was in earnest. "Shall we trail them a way?"

"Yes," replied Pollyanna, without a moment's hesitation.

"Good heavens!" expostulated Jimmy. "What do you people think you are, actors in a movie melodrama?" But apparently his protest fell on deaf ears. When they had taken their places in the car, instead of turning toward home, it started off in the opposite direction.

It was some time before they again caught sight of their quarry. Had there been an open road, overtaking the high-powered car would not have been easy, but as the full theatre had practically emptied at the same time, progress was next to impossible. All along the roadway, cars were backing out, despite the bleated protests of innumerable horns, suggesting the Chicago stock yards on a busy day. Even when, after a long delay, they were clear of the congestion, luck was against them. Each traffic signal changed as they came near, and the red light held them up inexorably. Pollyanna was beginning

to concur mentally with Jimmy's opinion, emphatically expressed, that they were engaged in a wild goose chase, when, with a triumphant exclamation, Lindsay pointed to a car standing at the side of the road, a little distance ahead.

"There they are," he cried. "Fox had better buy a Ford if he doesn't want to attract attention. Now we've caught them, what shall we do next?"

The speedometer dropped from forty miles an hour to ten, but during the crawling progress of the next few minutes, no one attempted to answer Lindsay's question. But as it proved, an immediate answer was unnecessary, for just before they reached the motionless car, it started on again, though no longer rapidly. Lindsay accepted the pace and followed just behind.

In half an hour or so, the car in the lead took a turning to the right. Lindsay followed. Soon they saw ahead a brightly lighted, rambling hotel before which a number of cars were parked. Lindsay addressed Jimmy over his shoulder. "Shouldn't wonder if this was our destination. Place doesn't bear the best of reputations."

His guess proved correct. The car ahead stopped at the hotel and an imperative blast from the horn brought a man in uniform hurrying down the steps. After a brief colloquy, a suit case and a small leather

bag were handed out, and then Paula Merrill alighted. She followed the attendant up the steps, while the car disappeared around the building seeking the garage in the rear.

"Looks like our cue," said Lindsay to Pollyanna. "Enter Nemesis."

He drove to the curb and all three alighted. Even Jimmy had caught the spirit of the occasion and made no protest.

Awaiting her escort, Paula Merrill stood near the entrance, a demure figure, irreproachably garbed. She turned her head as the trio entered, and then perceiving nothing of interest, looked away. Feeling very much as if she were walking up to the mouth of a loaded cannon, Pollyanna approached her. "Good evening, Miss Merrill."

The girl started violently and faced about. She made no attempt to return Pollyanna's greeting, but stared at her with a dismay the reverse of complimentary. Indeed something in her expression suggested to Pollyanna that she was on the point of denying her identity, and she took steps to preclude that possibility by saying, "You may not remember me, but I met you a few weeks ago at Mr. Carew's. I'm Mrs. Pendleton." She turned to Jimmy, "I'm sure, my dear, you remember my speaking of Miss

Merrill. This is my husband, Mr. Pendleton, and this is Mr. Lindsay."

Fox entering the room, after his brief separation from his companion, found her the centre of a group, exchanging inane remarks across her rigid figure. And with the discovery that Miss Merrill had encountered several acquaintances of strongly social inclinations, his expression changed disconcertingly. Indeed it was so suggestive of flight, that immediately Lindsay spoke his name, in a voice loud enough to be heard above the cacophony of the jazz orchestra in the adjoining room. "How are you, Fox?"

The man came toward them, grimacing painfully in his effort to smile. He had gone an unwholesome greenish color, and looked as if he might be violently sick at any moment. The luxuries Mr. Fox enjoyed were due less to his own industry, than to the generosity of a wealthy wife, and nothing was further from his wish than a divorce.

"Good evening, Mr. Lindsay." He thought of offering his hand, but something in Lindsay's manner made him hesitate. He glanced expectantly toward Pollyanna and Jimmy, but no one offered to introduce them, so he stumbled on. "D'ye know anything about this place? I don't. Had to stop

on account of engine trouble. Pretty badly crippled, too. No chance of getting home tonight."

"In that case, Mr. Fox," said Pollyanna, her tone so courteously conventional that Jimmy unconsciously looked resentful "we can relieve you of the responsibility of Miss Merrill. We have plenty of room for her."

Fox was just frightened enough to snatch at the offer. "Awf'ly good of you I'm sure. Bad time for engine trouble when you're fifty miles from home."

"Indeed it is," said Pollyanna, still diplomatic. She turned to the girl and felt a stirring of sympathy at the sight of her shamed face. Whatever Paula Merrill had believed herself capable of, she was not a hardened sinner. The realization that she was caught, that these three courteous strangers must be perfectly aware of the situation, had brought a terrible enlightenment. She stood aghast, overwhelmed by the realization of irretrievable disgrace.

"Did you have a bag, Miss Merrill?" Pollyanna asked, determined to end the intolerable situation as speedily as possible. The girl made no reply, but Fox, crimson to his ears, dashed forward and snatched the small over-night bag from the attendant.

"Miss Merrill was planning to spend the night

with her aunt," he explained, grimacing nervously. Then to the boy, "Leave my suit case at the office till I've taken another look at my car."

He was beginning to edge away as he muttered his thanks. "Any time I can do you a favor, call on me." He bowed ceremoniously as he said good-night to Miss Merrill, his shifty eyes dodging the appeal of hers.

All too frequently it happens in life that the achievement of an unselfish and admirable purpose, leaves one with the sensations of a criminal. The three persons who had interfered so successfully in behalf of an ignorant and reckless girl, felt none of the elation that was their due. As they carried her off, they were ashamed to meet one another's eyes. They had saved Paula, but they were responsible for her anguish of humiliation, and an illogical impression of having been cruel and unfeeling lay heavy on their hearts.

The drive home was a ghastly experience none of them could ever forget. Pollyanna and Paula occupied the rear seat, the latter withdrawing into her corner, apparently with the idea of getting as far from her companion as possible. As they entered the car, Pollyanna suggested casually that since it was so late, Miss Merrill had better go home with them, and the girl had neither accepted the invitation

nor declined it. Once when Pollyanna laid a sympathetic hand against the slight, almost childish figure, crowded against the side of the car, Paula had writhed away from her touch, and during the remainder of the drive Pollyanna sat silent, oppressed by a feeling of helplessness new in her experience. On the front seat the two men kept up a pretense of conversation for which she was grateful.

They were home at last, and Pollyanna led the way into the house trying to conduct herself like a conventional hostess with a conventional guest. "Would you like something to eat, Miss Merrill, or would you rather go right up to your room?"

The girl ignored the question, and Pollyanna after a nervous pause, assumed that she had chosen the latter alternative. "Then come right up," she said cordially. "And in the morning, sleep till you are rested. You can have your breakfast whenever you want it."

The little guest room was in perfect order. Pollyanna turned down the covers, opened a window, offered some quite needless explanations, and finally said goodnight. She was not sure whether Paula had answered or not. She went out of the room baffled.

CHAPTER XIII

THE TIRED LADY

When Pollyanna came downstairs after disposing of her guest, she found Jimmy exhausting his eloquence in the effort to persuade Lindsay to remain for the night.

"You got us into this mess," charged Jimmy, his carefully lowered voice emphasizing, rather than disguising his earnestness. "If it hadn't been for your car, we couldn't have played sleuth. In fact it was your suggestion that we should trail those people. And now don't think your going to walk off and leave us to face the music. No, you've got to see us through."

"Nothing I should like better, my dear fellow," Lindsay said. "But with one visitor on your hands, I'm afraid Pollyanna hasn't room for me."

"I haven't a room," replied Pollyanna, emphasizing the article. "You'll have to sleep on the davenport."

"And a fine bed it is," Jimmy assured him. "I've tried it times enough to know. Besides you can't

go home at this hour without compromising your reputation. You don't want to be regarded as a rounder, do you?"

"That's one of the advantages of having a good reputation," smiled Lindsay. "You can take so many liberties with it." But his next remark indicated that he had tacitly accepted Jimmy's pressing invitation, and Pollyanna went to look for sheets and pajamas.

In spite of her preposterously late hour of retiring, Pollyanna was awake early. The young Pendletons, like most children, were up with the sun, striving desperately to make up for the hours wasted in anything as prosy as sleep. Jiggs, too, having maintained a decorous quiet throughout the night, regarded daylight as a signal for frenzied activity. Pollyanna was out of bed as soon as the children stirred, and as she helped them to dress, she emphasized the importance of keeping still. There was a lady in the guest room, a very tired lady. They must be careful not to disturb her.

"Is it Aunt Polly?" Junior asked suspiciously. Aunt Polly held the all-too prevalent theory among adults that the model child is the one who most closely resembles a rag doll. Junior would never forget her repeated injunction; to be a good boy—and sit still.

"Oh, no, dear. Aunt Polly is a long way off, clear across the Atlantic ocean. This lady is Miss Merrill."

Junior pondered. "If she's so tired, what makes her come to see us? Why don't she stay at home and sleep?"

As it was impossible to explain to the inquisitive youngster why Miss Merrill preferred a stranger's roof to her own, Pollyanna only repeated her charge regarding quiet. And when Junior and Judy went downstairs, they moved with such exaggerated caution that Judy fell several steps, and raised her voice in lamentation.

Three quarters of an hour past the usual time for Sunday breakfast, the family gathered in the dining-room and conversed in whispers over their meal. There had been no sound in the guest room. "I hope the poor thing is asleep," sighed Pollyanna.

Judy pricked up her ears. "What for is she poor, mother?"

"Oh, she's so very tired."

"What makes her so tired?"

"Well, for one thing she has to work to earn her living."

"Like Nancy does," explained Junior, proud of his superior knowledge. "But mother don't have to work for *her* living, do you, mother?"

A laugh went the round of the table. "No, indeed, son. Your mother is in a class with the lilies of the field," chuckled Jimmy. But Pollyanna observed a shadow on Junior's face, due to the suspicion he was being laughed at, and she interposed, "No, Junior, I never had to earn my living. First Aunt Polly took care of me, and now Daddy does."

"An' when I grow up, and Daddy's a poor old man, I'll do it," Junior promised. And the pathetic figure of himself, as feeble and incapacitated, so amused Jimmy that he shouted with laughter, breaking off with ludicrous abruptness as Pollyanna pointed an admonitory finger toward the ceiling.

As the forenoon passed and there was still no sound upstairs, Pollyanna grew nervous. The clock struck eleven, struck twelve. At the half hour she took her courage in her hands and knocked at Miss Merrill's door. The silence that ensued was terrifying. She rapped again and spoke imperatively.

"Miss Merrill, open the door, please. I want to speak to you."

The sound of dragging feet silenced a fear to which she had not dared give a name. A key rasped in the lock, and that was all. Pollyanna waited a moment, then turned the knob and entered.

Paula had dropped into a chair. Apparently she

had been sitting there all night. The bed had not been occupied. In the brilliant light the girl's face was pinched and wan, hardly beautiful.

"Oh, you didn't go to bed." Pollyanna drew up a rocking chair and sat down. "I'm sorry. After a good night's rest, things look so different."

There was a hysterical fluttering in the girl's white throat. "I don't see what business you have to interfere," she burst out. "I have a right to do as I please with my own life. I should think you wouldn't want anything to do with such a horrible person."

"Did I call you a horrible person?" Pollyanna smiled a little.

"That's what you think, anyway."

"Perhaps it's what you think. So often we fancy other people are thinking what we do."

The girl tilted her chin defiantly. "Everybody doesn't feel as you do about—things. You're one of the folks who think life is like a checker-board, and everybody's got to keep on the squares to play the game. But other people—"

Pollyanna interrupted her with an exclamation. For a moment she had been under the impression that she had lived through this scene before, that in some previous incarnation she had listened to these very words. Then the solution flashed upon her.

The reference to the checker-board was adapted from James Carew's novel "Growing Pains." Miss Merrill was quoting, not literally, but quoting nevertheless, from the heroine, Mrs. Rutledge. And with this discovery, Paula Merrill seemed more than ever a pathetic, misguided, foolish little girl.

"No, life isn't a checker-board," Pollyanna answered. "And it isn't a story book, either. Heroines in fiction are privileged characters. If you follow their example, you may get into serious trouble."

"But some people think," Paula persisted, and then halted uncertainly. "Doesn't Mr. Carew—"

Her voice died away, as if, after all, she did not dare to put the question, and after a moment Pollyanna finished for her. "If you wonder whether Mr. Carew believes as his characters do, in 'Growing Pains,' I can tell you that he doesn't." Her indignation waxed hot, not against this foolish girl, but against those who had misled and betrayed the younger generation with their perverted pictures of life, and lying philosophies. Paula had been snatched like a brand from the burning, but there must be others, led on by these false guides, to the loss of everything worth keeping.

She sat a little longer, trying to take advantage of the girl's humiliation and misery to make her feel

her friendliness, but even her optimism could not detect a response. And when she mentioned casually that dinner would be ready at two, Paula recoiled. "Oh, I don't want anything to eat."

"But, child, you must eat. You didn't have any breakfast."

"It would choke me to eat in this house," Paula flashed out with such seeming hostility that even Pollyanna was taken aback.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon of that memorable Sunday when Miss Merrill came downstairs dressed for the street. As she appeared the conversation broke off abruptly, like the plotting of a group of conspirators taken by surprise. The men jumped to their feet, and Pollyanna hurried forward, attempting to conceal under a smiling exterior, an unreasonable feeling of consternation.

"Now, Miss Merrill, you really must let me fix you a little luncheon."

"I don't care for anything to eat, thank you." Without noticing the men, Paula turned to the door. "I suppose there are trains for the city every few minutes."

"There are not very many Sunday trains. Just sit down while I look for a time-table."

Lindsay had a suggestion to offer. "Miss Mer-

rill, won't you let me drive you in? My car is right here, and I'm going to the city myself."

Paula snatched at the offer. The thing uppermost in her thoughts was the need of getting away. And while this young man with the quiet manners was in the secret of what had happened the previous evening, for some reason she found him less formidable than either Mrs. Pendleton or her handsome husband. "That would be awfully nice," she said quickly. "Only—I don't want to hurry you."

"If I don't go soon, Mrs. Pendleton will never ask me again. I'll bring the car around immediately." As he went for his hat, Lindsay managed to whisper to Pollyanna, "I'll take her to dinner somewhere. Don't worry."

In five minutes the car was ready and the Pendleton family in a body escorted Miss Merrill to the door. As the conventional courtesies between hostess and guest were out of the question, Pollyanna talked very rapidly, to obviate any possible awkwardness. But somewhere between sentences was a pause long enough for Junior to interject a question.

"Mother, if folks slept the whole time, wouldn't they ever have to eat?"

A significant pressure on his arm warned him not to insist on an answer. Pollyanna was bravely

continuing the one-sided conversation, when Judy's shrill tones interrupted her.

"Oh, goody! Here comes Uncle James, n' Aunt Sadie n' little Jamie."

As a matter of fact, the Carew family were alighting from their car just in time for a good view of Pollyanna's departing guests. Sadie's exclamation, "Why, Miss Merrill," might have suggested to ears versed in the niceties of intonation, surprise rather than pleasure. The girl blushed deeply, as she bowed, but she did not linger. Lindsay's car glided away, leaving the burden of explanation on Pollyanna.

"What's the great idea?" James challenged her gaily. "Are you trying to rob me of my secretary?"

Pollyanna hastily disclaimed any such intention.

"I must say that is looks rather suspicious, inviting her here with that young Lindsay." Sadie pronounced disapprovingly. "I didn't suppose you knew her well enough to ask her to dinner."

"That lady don't eat dinner," interjected Junior, on whom this unique fact in natural history had made a deep impression. "And she don't eat breakfast either. She just sleeps all the time."

"Sleeps all the time!" Sadie's bewilderment was not unnatural. "What on earth does the child mean?"

Under the circumstances, there seemed no escape from giving a full explanation. "I'll tell you after a little," Pollyanna promised. And later, when the children were occupied elsewhere, she told the story of the night's adventure. In spite of her effort to deal leniently with Miss Merrill in her account, she was aware that Sadie was listening with growing indignation. Indeed she did not wait for the conclusion of the story before announcing an ultimatum.

"Well, Pollyanna, I certainly am grateful to you for telling me this. That girl is never coming into my house again."

"Sadie!"

Apparently the vehemence of the exclamation took Sadie by surprise. She answered with equal warmth, "I don't know why you take that tone, Pollyanna. The girl isn't respectable."

"Well, let it go at that. The question is, is she worth saving or not?"

"People have to think of their reputations," Sadie cried. "You're responsible, Pollyanna, for that nice Mr. Lindsay being seen with a girl of loose character. I think that's culpable."

"I don't think people's reputations suffer permanently from trying to help those who need it."

"You're so impractical, Pollyanna. The idea of

taking a girl of that sort into your home. Well, you may do it, if you like, but I won't. I have my husband and son to think of."

The situation was anything but amusing, yet, in spite of herself, Pollyanna laughed at the idea of protecting little Jamie from Miss Merrill's insidious influence. The laughter was ill-timed. Sadie fairly bristled.

"I can't understand you, Pollyanna. I may be old-fashioned, but I can't see why a girl who has been prevented by the merest chance from disgracing herself, should be treated as a reputable member of society."

"But, Sadie, all I'm asking is to give the girl a chance to see her mistake. She's so young that she can't be beyond helping."

"I don't know her age," Sadie was beginning, but James, who up to this point had been acting as audience to the impromptu debate, supplied the necessary information. "She's not quite eighteen."

"There!" Pollyanna exulted. "She's only a child —a child in the eyes of the law, even. It's absurd to look on her as an abandoned woman. You and I together ought to be able—"

"I wash my hands of her," Sadie said with finality. "Such time as I have to spare I'll devote to girls who don't show her tendency."

Pollyanna regarded her friend steadily "I'm not sure that you *can* wash your hands of her, Sadie. I think you and James are partly responsible for this."

"What!" James exploded indignantly. "My dear Pollyanna, what are you talking about?"

"About that book of yours, 'Growing Pains'. It advances a theory of life which isn't yours, I know. But Miss Merrill, not being as well acquainted with you as I am, has accepted it as the expression of your deepest convictions."

The attack was so unexpected that James only stared at her, but Sadie rushed headlong to his defense. "The idea of holding James' book responsible for Miss Merrill's conduct. It's absurd."

"No, it isn't, Sadie, and I'll tell you how I know. I had a little talk with Miss Merrill this morning, and she startled me by quoting James' Mrs Rutledge about the checker-board."

"Checker-board, why I—"

"Your heroine called it a chess-board, but it's all the same. As I remember it, she accused conventional people of drawing arbitrary lines, and insisting that other people should stay within those lines, and then she compared society to a chess-board. And I could see that Miss Merrill had come to the conclusion that up-to-date people regard chastity as

of no importance whatever, and consider that the women who dare are rather finer than the rest of us."

James Carew sat without speaking, and Sadie glancing anxiously at his perturbed face, again expostulated. "Pollyanna, you can't be serious. You can't mean that you hold James responsible because a crazy girl decided to follow the example of one of his characters."

"I hold him responsible for making respectability seem tame and cowardly, and immorality romantic and beautiful. Here's a young girl who naturally respects James and his opinions. Day after day she is saturated with ideas that are upsetting to anybody so inexperienced. Aren't the people in 'Growing Pains' who are shocked when Mrs. Rutledge leaves her husband for her lover, the meanest characters in the book, narrow and small and Pharisaical?"

She looked James in the eye and waited till he answered slowly, "Why, yes, I suppose they are."

"All the nice people practically condone her conduct. At least it doesn't make any difference in their attitude toward her, does it?"

Again she waited until the catechized author admitted her correctness.

"Well, that may be a true picture of life in some parts of the world. And it may be true in some

little circles in this country. But it's not true of the real America that you and I know, and you can't pretend that it is."

James hesitated. "Possibly not," he owned at length.

"And this little inexperienced girl—small-town product, isn't she?"

"She's the daughter of a country store-keeper," James said reluctantly.

"Well, every day she's fed on this sort of thing. She gets the idea that in the best circles, it is bad form to let the ten commandments interfere with anything one wants to do, and that she can follow Mrs. Rutledge's example without losing caste. And that's why I say you and Sadie can't wash your hands of Miss Merrill. You turned her head with your theories—they aren't really yours, but she couldn't know that—and you'll have to stand by till she's faced around in the right direction."

"I don't know why you drag Sadie in," James said, rather sulkily. "She didn't write the book."

"No, but she defended it. She's always telling me what nice things the critics say about it."

The pause was protracted. Sadie looked anxiously at her husband, waiting for her cue, but James' frowning abstraction was not enlightening. When finally he spoke, he addressed Pollyanna.

"I'm beginning to wonder if perhaps you're not right."

Pollyanna did not affect a modesty she did not feel. "Of course I'm right."

"The other day when you spoke of the influence of my books, I was downright angry. Most of the fellows in the game would think it the biggest joke in the world if they knew I took such a thing into consideration. But after all, I suppose there are people whose conduct is more or less affected by the books they read."

"I don't know any people who are not that way," said Pollyanna.

"Most of us think of the reading public as a sort of abstract element," mused James, "and so we don't trouble ourselves about our responsibilities. But when the public is personified as a pretty little greenhorn, like Paula Merrill, it's a different matter. Of course a fellow has to think of his art—"

"The Devil whispered behind the leaves
It's decent, but is it Art?"

murmured Pollyanna, and her shameless paraphrase of Kipling brought a smile to James' lips.

"I hardly suppose the decent and the artistic are as incompatible as some of us seem to think," he said. "And anyway—Art isn't the whole show."

Bedtime came early in the Pendleton household

that evening. Jimmy said that Sunday reminded him of a combination of a college debating society, and a national clean-up week. "It was bad enough without the Carews turning up. That was the last straw."

"Why, no, Jimmy," Pollyanna cried. "I'm glad they came just when they did. Probably they would have found out about Miss Merrill sooner or later, and it's better to have it over with. Sadie's a little upset this evening, but by tomorrow morning, she'll feel just as James does, and won't believe she ever felt any different. And the best part of all," concluded Pollyanna, with a sigh of mingled weariness and satisfaction, "whoever writes the next 'Growing Pains', it won't be James Carew."

CHAPTER XIV

"CRUEL AS THE GRAVE"

It was getting too late in the season for Lorraine Chalmers to sit out under the trees, and when Pollyanna wished to see her, she marched boldly to the front door and rang the bell. The maid who generally answered her ring was a middle-aged woman, one of the type of servants who bid fair to become as extinct as the dinosaur, before many years have passed. She had been with the family long enough to make their joys and sorrows her own, and she had come to recognize Pollyanna as a valuable ally in the business of winning the young mistress of the house back to sanity. If it was necessary to tell Pollyanna that Miss Chalmers asked to be excused, Emma announced it as a misfortune they had in common. If the word was that Pollyanna was to be admitted, she said, "Walk right upstairs, Mrs. Pendleton," speaking with guarded elation, as a kind-hearted physician would announce the crisis past and the patient on the way to recovery. But on the Monday following Pollyanna's impromptu house party, Emma was in doubt.

"If you'll step in a moment, Mrs. Pendleton, I'll ask her. She's had a bad day, Miss Lorraine has. She didn't get out o' bed till afternoon, and she hasn't et enough to founder a wren. But she ain't said she wouldn't see nobody, so I'll find out."

After that report, Pollyanna fully expected to return home without seeing her neighbor. It was an agreeable surprise to have Emma return beaming, and inform her she was to go up to Miss Lorraine's room. "You could have knocked me down with a feather," Emma owned, in a carefully lowered voice. "When Miss Lorraine has a bad day, it sets her against company more'n ever. Of course she don't see nobody but you at her best times, but today I certainly thought you'd wasted ankle grease crossing that street."

"Perhaps she is beginning to feel a little better," Pollyanna suggested, in the same tone of confidential understanding. It was characteristic of her to meet people on the plane of a common humanity, regardless of social distinctions, and she thought herself lucky to have friends in all classes. To a casual caller, Emma would have seemed a well-trained servant, going through a certain routine as correctly as an automaton, and possessed of no more individuality than a telephone pole, or any other stand-

ardized article. But the real Emma, Pollyanna had discovered, was a human being with a flavor peculiarly piquant. The more the woman cropped out through the maid's mannerisms, the better she was pleased. Pollyanna enjoyed being one of the people to whom shop girls confide their love affairs, and who are consulted by laundresses and furnace men, regarding their family difficulties. It gratified her to know that Emma looked on her as a friend.

Pollyanna ran up the stairs and went swiftly down the hall to Lorraine's room, the door of which stood ajar. She tapped lightly to notify the occupant of her coming, and went in. Lorraine, wearing a negligee, was lying on the couch between the windows, and Pollyanna's start as she looked in her direction, was due to shocked surprise. In the short time since she had seen her, the girl had changed alarmingly. Apparently she had lost flesh, for she looked thin, almost haggard, and her fresh color had faded. Though she returned Pollyanna's smile of greeting, to the keen eyes of the visitor it seemed purely a muscular contraction, with no heart in it.

Concealing her secret dismay under an elaborately cheerful manner, Pollyanna shook a re-

proachful forefinger at the recumbent figure. "Lorraine, dear, I'm so sorry you have been sick. Why didn't you let me know?" Without waiting for an answer to the question, she followed it up with another, "What's the trouble, a cold?"

Lorraine languidly disclaimed a cold. "I didn't sleep well last night, that's all." Her manner changed from listlessness to extreme vivacity too rapidly to be convincing. "Let's not discuss my uninteresting self. What have you been doing?"

"Oh, I've been busy as usual," Pollyanna said. "We were out with Mr. Lindsay on Saturday and didn't get back till late."

"I saw you had visitors for the week end," Lorraine commented irrelevantly. Then she added, "What a lovely little creature Mr. Lindsay's friend is."

"Mr. Lindsay's friend?"

Pollyanna later accused herself of rank stupidity, and held her surprise to be sufficient proof that the accusation was well-founded. For while she vaguely realized that Lorraine must be referring to Paula Merrill, it took her a moment to understand the reason for the assumption that Lindsay was especially interested in the girl.

"I saw them drive away together," Lorraine

explained. "Even at this distance, their bliss was unmistakable. She looks a little young for him perhaps, but very pretty and sweet."

With difficulty Pollyanna choked back a laugh. Once or twice before she had considered the possibility of Lorraine's being jealous, but it was no longer a debatable question. Only jealousy could have so misinterpreted Paula Merrill's expression of sulky resentment, and Lindsay's gentlemanly resignation. Then her impulse toward laughter vanished as she wondered if the transformation in the girl before her was due to what she imagined she had seen. Twenty-four hours of jealous agony might work as startling changes.

She answered casually, yet with decision, "Oh, that's not a friend of Mr. Lindsay's. He had never met her before Saturday night, but he was kind enough to drive her home."

"I see." Gay as Lorraine's manner had become, there was noticeable edge to her voice. "I remember that you had an idea that Mr. Lindsay had been disappointed in love or something like that, and I suppose you are hoping some pretty girl will help work a cure."

Pollyanna studied the speaker reflectively. She did not wish to make a too thorough job of

reassuring her. A little jealousy might be a good thing for Lorraine, if it did not go far enough to affect her health. Pollyanna had observed that too great a feeling of security where a man's affections are concerned, betrays many women into one sort of folly or another. At the same time she realized the need of caution. A great deal depended on Lorraine's liking for her and Pollyanna was secretly of the opinion that Lorraine would hate the woman who tried to marry Lindsay off.

With a little laugh, she said, "You're the second person to accuse me of trying my hand at match-making where those two are concerned, and I plead not guilty."

"I'm not accusing you. I don't doubt it would be an excellent thing."

"I'd like to see Frank married," Pollyanna assured her with perfect truth, "but not to Paula Merrill."

"Why not? She has the essential qualifications."

Pollyanna's eyebrows went up. "How can you say that without knowing either of them? How can you be so sure what is necessary for Frank's happiness?"

"That riddle was solved before you and I were

born, Pollyanna. Beauty! That's what all men want in their women, and what all women want for themselves, because of the men. The poets have kept telling us that from the beginning."

Pollyanna spoke quickly. "It's lucky that every man in love has his own ideal of beauty, and that it strongly resembles the girl of his heart. In a beauty competition, Jimmy would unhesitatingly give me the first prize, even if Mary Pickford were one of the contestants, and he'd be perfectly honest about it, too." She leaned toward Lorraine with an exaggerated air of secrecy. "I'm going to tell you something surprising. I'm really glad not to be a beauty."

Unexpectedly Lorraine laughed aloud. "That's the funniest thing I ever heard of. Beside if that's ground for giving thanks, you have less to be thankful for than most of my acquaintances."

"You see what I mean, don't you?" Pollyanna was too much in earnest to notice the compliment. "A woman who is loved for her beauty and nothing else, must be almost afraid to look in the mirror in the morning, for when her beauty goes, everything goes with it. But hundreds of thousands of women like me know we are loved for something as independent of our

looks as our bodies are independent of the clothes we wear. I don't mean to get wrinkled or lose my teeth any sooner than I must, but Jimmy wouldn't stop loving me on that account any more than he'd stop loving me if I put on an unbecoming dress."

Lorraine stared, as if fascinated, at the young wife's glowing face. "It's the strangest thing," she cried. "Sometimes when I listen to you, I feel as if we must have been living in different worlds."

"I suppose we have. We are all living in worlds of our own making, aren't we?"

"Oh!" Lorraine's lips twisted in an unhappy smile. "You're implying, aren't you, that the the defects of mine are my own fault?"

"I believe we see what we are looking for. I'm rather suspicious of the people who find the world altogether base, and I'm sorry for the ones who think life is hideous, as you called it the other day."

Lorraine sprang up suddenly. "Pollyanna, you're a woman to be envied. Tell me one thing. Is it your natural disposition that makes you take such a view of everything, or is it the game Judy talked about?"

"My disposition may have helped, but the

game certainly did. If you make a habit all your life of looking for compensations you find a lot of them. You know," Pollyanna explained earnestly, "I don't agree at all with the old philosopher—I forget his name—who said that everything was for the best in this best of all possible worlds. But I do believe that whatever your troubles, you can look at them from such an angle that you'll find something to be glad about."

"For this, too?"

Lorraine whirled about, turning her disfigured cheek toward Pollyanna, her finger pressed to the scar, which looked livid against her unusual pallor. Pollyanna quivered as if the question had been a blow in the face. Her heart was racing. She could feel the pulses pounding in her temples. The certainty that the moment was crucial settled down upon her with crushing weight. With a tremendous effort of her will, she ironed the quaver from her voice, and spoke with steadying matter-of-factness. "For that too, of course."

"But what in God's name—"

"You'll have to work that out for yourself," said Pollyanna. "That's the only way it will really mean anything to you. I'll make only one sug-

gestion. It might be worth while to undergo something like that, just to find out how little it really mattered."

Neither spoke again. Lorraine dropped back upon the couch and lay motionless with closed eyes. And after a time Pollyanna rose, kissed her friend gently, and without a word, tiptoed from the room.

CHAPTER XV

PAULA

As Lindsay turned his car from the Pendleton's door, headed for the city, he was well aware that the situation called for all the diplomacy he possessed. He was distinctly sorry for the girl beside him. She was too young and vigorous to show the effect of her sleepless night, followed by a day of fasting, as an older woman would have done, but she looked rather wan and pathetic, and extremely pretty with it all.

Lindsay's conversational overtures were nicely balanced between the volubility suggesting embarassment, and the reticence which might be interpreted as disapproval. Rather to his surprise, his companion met him half way. To a girl of Paula's type, an hour's drive with a personable young man was distinctly exciting, and even her intolerable sense of humiliation was not proof against the appeal of this adventure. For all her crudity, she fully appreciated the per-

fection of Lindsay's attitude. He had none of the conscious superiority of the moralist, nor on the other hand, did he take it for granted that the incident which had led to their acquaintance, justified him in regarding her lightly. Paula said to herself that he wasn't a bit "fresh" and was vaguely grateful for his failure to assume that the episode with Fox proved her open to advances from any source.

Lindsay thought it best to take her by surprise in the matter of dinner, and when the time came, he merely turned up a side street, and stopped before a small hotel where he had eaten on a number of occasions. "We'll have dinner here, I think," he said casually, as if dining were the inevitable accompaniment of the drive home.

"I believe I'm beginning to be hungry," Paula said, and Lindsay smiled, well pleased with the way he had managed. He mentally pictured himself crowing over Pollyanna when next they met, not realizing that his success was due less to his superior diplomacy, than to the constitutional incapacity of girls of Paula's type, to be fair to their own sex. Paula was suspicious of Pollyanna's motives. She interpreted her interest as patronage. Even though she was thankful for her escape from Fox, she felt an

illogical resentment at Pollyanna's interference in her affairs. But for Lindsay, who had been an equal offender, she found excuses, crediting him with the kindest intentions, and naïvely assuming his admiration for herself.

With chivalrous disregard of his having partaken of a hearty dinner a few hours earlier, so that he found the mere thought of food obnoxious, Lindsay ordered lavishly, resolved to make himself so entertaining that his guest would not notice his failure to do justice to his own selection. But Paula's eyes were sharper than he expected. As the waiter removed his soup-plate, its contents not appreciably diminished, Paula said plaintively, "I'm afraid you think I'm greedy. You hardly eat anything."

As each mouthful was harder than the last, Lindsay decided that safety lay in confession. "You have a big advantage over me. I've already had two hearty meals today. And at Mrs. Pendleton's, everything is so tempting that I'm always in danger of overeating."

"You like her, don't you?"

To Lindsay's ear, something in Paula's inflection implied criticism of his taste, and without betraying his resentment, he made his answer emphatic.

"Oh, yes, I'm one of Mrs. Pendleton's greatest admirers. Mrs. Pendleton is—well, I started to say a woman in a thousand, but that would be underrating it. She's so full of kindness and cheerfulness that she'd put heart into the most incorrigible pessimist who ever howled that the world was going straight to the devil. Some people merely hope for the best. Mrs. Pendleton jumps in and goes to work to make things better."

He was not aware that he had come to the end of his panegyric, but at this point Paula interrupted him with a shrill laugh. "My, but you do admire her!" she cried. "What would happen if I told Mr. Pendleton what you just said."

"He wouldn't be surprised at all. He has heard me say as much and more on several occasions."

The waiter placed fried chicken and waffles before them, and Paula, who had experienced the irritation not unusual in pretty women whose companions instead of complimenting them, waste their enthusiasm on the absent, felt her momentary sense of injury subsiding as the tempting odor rose to her nostrils. "Oh, I hope you can eat this," she cried. "It would be terrible to smell anything so good and not feel like eating it." There was something so

childish in her fervor that Lindsay laughed, and then he, too, forgot his passing pique.

The one-sided meal was drawing to a close when a young fellow who had been seated at a table some distance behind them strolled past, and as several men had done before him, glanced appraisingly at Paula. He walked on some ten feet, then with a start faced about, giving her a second inspection. Then he came back and stood beside the table. Paula engrossed in an elaborate ice, had not noticed him till she heard the sharp catch of his breath. She looked up quickly.

"Paula Merrill! I knew it was you."

"Lloyd Woodward!" The two exclamations were simultaneous. Paula looking prettier than ever in her excitement, lost interest in her ice cream. "To think of running into you."

"Are you living around here?" the young fellow asked, "or are you just visiting?"

"Oh, I'm living in the city. I've got a job." At this point Paula bethought herself of her manners. "Mr Woodward, meet Mr. Lindsay." She added to her escort the enlightening explanation, "Lloyd comes from my home town."

The two men shook hands, and Lindsay, sizing up the youngster, approved him. "We're just

finishing dinner," he said. "But won't you have some ice cream with Miss Merrill?"

"No, thank you. I've just finished dinner myself." He inspected Lindsay with an interest which to the older man seemed strongly tinctured with surprise. Lindsay fancied him agreeably impressed by Miss Merrill's escort, and for his part he was ready to give the girl any advantage which might be due to their fortuitous companionship.

"Are you driving? If not, we're going directly to the city, and I shall be glad to give you a lift." Lindsay reflected that if young Woodward thought him Paula's admirer, he would consider him abnormally magnanimous.

The young man was not driving, but it took considerable persuasion to bring him to the point of accepting Lindsay's offer. Indeed it was difficult for Lindsay to set his scruples at rest, without explaining rather more fully than was compatible with delicacy, how little Paula's society meant to him. It was Paula herself, who finally took the bull by the horns, and cried with an excited laugh, "I guess, Mr. Lindsay, that Lloyd's afraid it's a case of 'two's a company, three's a crowd.' "

"Tell him we're fond of crowds."

"Mr. Lindsay isn't a special friend of mine," explained Paula, while young Woodward blushed in-

genuously. "He—well, we both stayed at the same place Saturday night, and this afternoon he was nice enough to offer to drive me home."

"Mr. Woodward is wondering why that should be credited to me as virtue when all the men we've passed on the road have wished themselves in my shoes." Lindsay turned smilingly to the young man. "I really shall be very glad to have you join us, and I'm sure Miss Merrill will enjoy it."

Woodward's scruples were allayed at last, and the trio left the hotel together. Lindsay put the two youngsters in the back seat, and while he himself talked only enough to show his good will, he listened with considerable interest. Though the two came from the same town, he soon realized that they did not know each other at all intimately, and that the cordiality of their greeting was due largely to the fact that they had met in a land of strangers.

He guessed, too, from something indefinable in their talk that in the little town of Greenfield, the Merrills ranked beneath the Woodwards in the social scale. He had known intuitively that young Woodward was surprised to find Paula dining with a man of his type, and wondered with considerable amusement, whether the boy's emotions were as legible to Paula as to himself.

In this impression he had not been misled by

vanity. Lloyd Woodward had a rather strong sense of social values, and had been tremendously impressed by Paula's escort. The discovery that a girl who had never been admitted to the select circles of Greenfield—for social cliques in a small town frequently draw more rigid lines than would be possible in a large city—had in an urban environment won an admirer of such distinction, made him distrustful of the standards of his birthplace.

Then, too, there was Paula's astonishing prettiness to be reckoned with. It challenged him provocatively. It was about two years since he had seen her last, and he could not make up his mind whether she had been devoting that time to growing pretty, or whether on the occasion of their last meeting, he had been stupidly and incomprehensibly blind.

Lindsay noticed approvingly that young Woodward was writing down Paula's address and asking in a manner indicating that he thought the information important, when he was likely to find her at home. Lindsay considered that in Pollyanna's campaign in behalf of Miss Merrill, a nice young fellow from the girl's home town would prove an invaluable ally.

As a matter of fact this service was more immediate than he had any idea of. While Paula talked to the young man who in Greenfield had

headed the list of eligibles, her thoughts reverted to the adventure of the previous evening with a sense of panic. The sight of Lloyd Woodward re-established the standards of Greenfield. The thought of what he would say if he knew what she had been on the point of doing, was curiously disquieting. Once or twice she stopped in the middle of a sentence, forgetting what she had meant to say, as she found herself picturing Lloyd's reaction if he heard of her escapade with Gerald Fox. Instead of being an advanced young woman with the most up-to-date ideas regarding love and marriage, she was a small-town girl who had taken a terrible risk with her reputation, and was desperately afraid of being found out. While it was very pleasant to know she was to see Lloyd again later in the week, Paula went to her room in the boarding-house after the most momentous twenty-four hours of her life, plagued by a haunting sense of apprehension.

Her complacency was to be still further jarred. For when she saw her employer next morning, instead of handing her a sheaf of penciled sheets, as he had done most mornings of the previous week, he dropped down into the easy chair, his empty hands dangling at his sides.

"I don't know what to set you at today, Miss

Merrill. Isn't there a short story I corrected after it was typed?"

Paula regarded him sympathetically. When she had left the previous Saturday, he was writing furiously, so absorbed that one had to speak to him twice to get his attention, and then ran the risk of being blasted by the lightning of his indignation. But Paula had been an author's secretary long enough to know that the output of these seeming periods of inspiration can sometimes be compressed into a few lines, when the necessary pruning has been done. "Didn't you get on well with the book, Saturday?" she asked.

James Carew ran his fingers through his hair, till the locks stood on end, like the quills of a porcupine. "I'm up in the air about the book," he said. "I'm afraid it will have to be scrapped."

"Scrapped?" Paula said aghast. The new book was half finished. The labor involved seemed to her enormous. The thrifty streak in her, a heritage from generations of hard-working, penny-pinching ancestors, recoiled from the idea of so much toil wasted. "But it was so interesting," she protested.

Her employer looked at her unhappily. Singularly enough her enthusiasm instead of gratifying him, seemed to affect him unpleasantly. Paula wondered uneasily if she had used the wrong word.

"I mean it's perfectly thrilling. It just grips you. I really cried when I copied the chapter where Margaret parts with Randolph, because she'd rather have a perfect memory than live on with him and see his love die by inches. I couldn't stand it not to know how their affair ended."

"It'll end in dust and ashes, as most such affairs do," said the author of "Growing Pains" grimly. "I may be able to save a few paragraphs here and there, but the manuscript is going to be burned. It will be some time of course, before I can get started on another book. You'll have to fill in with odd jobs until I get my ideas in shape."

As Paula sat at the type-writer, recopying the short story which had been corrected so drastically that hardly a sentence was left unaltered, her mind was so full of a number of things that the first time for many weeks, Gerald Fox was relegated to the background of her consciousness.

CHAPTER XVI

A DINNER PARTY

It was not often that Jimmy suggested anything elaborate in the way of entertaining. He had the masculine fondness for inviting a friend home to share what he optimistically called "pot luck," but he left the more ambitious efforts to his wife's initiative. For this reason Pollyanna was surprised to have him suggest a really formal dinner in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Van Zant.

"He's a big enough man so his liking might do a fellow a lot of good," Jimmy explained. "And I think he takes his orders from his wife. She goes in for society."

"Oh!" murmured Pollyanna with a slight sinking of the heart. "But I don't suppose she'd expect us—"

"I think we want to put our best foot foremost. Couldn't we get a pretty girl to wait on the table? Nancy is a humdinger of a cook, but she's a little heavy for a waitress. Beside she couldn't possibly cook and serve a formal dinner. If she tried it, we'd be at the table all night."

"I'll see what I can do," Pollyanna promised. For a moment she had wavered between acquiescence, and suggesting to Jimmy the inadvisability of attempting to entertain the Van Zants in the style to which they were accustomed, which was altogether inconsistent with the Pendleton's way of living. But Jimmy so seldom made requests of the sort that the protest died unspoken on her lips. Characteristically she told herself she should be glad Jimmy had such faith in her ability.

Mrs. Van Zant was a little tardy in replying to her note. Pollyanna must secretly have hoped she was going to decline, for she was astonished to realize that she read the acceptance of her invitation with a sharp pang of disappointment. And this in spite of the fact that she already had her *menu* planned. She had gone over it with Jimmy, item by item, and was astonished by his exacting attitude. Ordinarily he was content to leave everything of the sort to her. This time he not only knew what he wanted, but was determined to have what he wanted, though to Pollyanna's ideas, the dinner he has suggested seemed more suited to some palatial establishment, with a score of servants, than to their modest little home and limited means.

Pollyanna's invitation had been given about two weeks ahead of time, and though the acceptance had

been slow in coming, she still had several days in which to make her preparations. One of Mrs. Warner's friends had a maid not averse to making a little extra on her afternoon out, and as good luck would have it, her afternoon out coincided with Pollyanna's dinner party. Jimmy insisted on flowers from the florist, and Pollyanna ordered them, still with that feeling of doubt, and ordered ice cream and cake from an expensive confectioner. Jimmy had assured her that she would not be expected to pay for this dinner from her allowance, which was a very good thing.

In the interval between Mrs. Van Zant's acceptance and the dinner party, Jimmy met Mr. Van Zant in the city several times, and on one of those occasions, Mr. Van Zant stopped at his desk to ask a peculiar question. "Do you happen to have a cat, Pendleton?"

"A cat?" Jimmy repeated, wondering if this were a new bit of slang, and never for a moment supposing that the question was to be taken literally.

"Yes, a cat—feline—out at your place, you know."

Jimmy grinned. "Hope you don't want to present me with a kitten, Mr. Van Zant, for if there's anything we're fed up with, it's cats."

"The reason I asked," explained Mr. Van Zant,

his serious countenance conveying the impression that he saw no reason for attempted facetiousness, "is that Mrs. Van Zant objects to cats."

"Oh, I see."

"Strongly objects to them. It's an antipathy, you know. Many people share it. Didn't Shakespeare—"

"Yes, I believe he did say something about it," acknowledged Jimmy, as Mr. Van Zant paused. "Well, I'll see that our menagerie—the cat part of it—is locked up when you people come out for dinner."

"Thanks, Pendleton. I make a point of finding out about that matter since we dined with an acquaintance who had a housefull of angoras. Everywhere you looked there was a big cat, big as a sheep, pretty near. 'Pon my word, I thought Mrs. Van Zant would faint before I could get her out of the house."

Pollyanna, learning of Mrs. Van Zant's antipathy, for once was unsympathetic. "How perfectly silly!"

"My dear girl, the woman can't help it. It's very common. Don't you remember what Shakespeare says about people who can't abide a harmless, necessary cat?"

"Well, if I knew a thing was harmless and necessary, I should try very hard not to be upset by it,"

said Pollyanna. She added grudgingly, "But of course I'll see that our animals are all safely locked up before she comes into the house." Secretly she reproached herself that she could not anticipate the dinner party with more enthusiasm.

The hour for the dinner was late, in deference to the Van Zant's presumable custom, and Pollyanna thought it safest to give the children their dinner and send them all to bed. Junior and Judy resented this, and Judy pondering on her wrongs, grew fractious.

"Oh, I don't like anybody. I think everybody's horrid in the whole world."

Junior was shocked. "Why, Judy Pendleton, you ought to be ashamed. Don't you even like mother—or poor God?"

In spite of Judy's resentment, she was sound asleep before the Van Zant's arrival, late enough so that Polyanna had experienced qualms over the guinea-fowl. The sight of her guests confirmed her in her conviction that the dinner was a mistake. Pollyanna had put on her best frock, and Jimmy had donned a perfectly new business suit, but Mr. Van Zant was in evening dress, and Mrs. Van Zant was dazzling in a low-cut gown, and necklace of pearls. Her evening coat, as she deposited it on the bed in Pollyanna's guest-room, had the effect of making

everything in the room look cheap and plain. Pollyanna herself felt cheap and plain, in spite of repeatedly assuring herself that clothes did not make the man, nor pearls the woman.

There was nothing wrong with Pollyanna's dinner, except Mrs. Van Zant's air of being accustomed to dining off gold plate. There was little conversation during the evening, except Mrs. Van Zant's reminiscences, and strangely enough, they all concerned the socially prominent. Pollyanna was a little awed, at first, by the proximity of one on such intimate terms not only with multi-millionaires, but with the members of the English nobility, but before the soup plates were removed, her common sense was asserting itself.

"The woman isn't even well-bred," her thoughts ran. "She's boasting about her aristocratic acquaintances, and seemingly she hasn't another idea in her head." It was clearly absurd to be awed by a person of this stamp. Pollyanna, her poise quite restored, gave herself up to the enjoyment of her dinner. It was a good dinner, and had cost an appalling amount. Since Mrs. Van Zant's unceasing flow of recollections rendered it unnecessary for her hostess to exert herself to be entertaining, Pollyanna resolved to get her money's worth out of the dinner, as far as that was possible. She ate stolidly,

listening all the time to the lady on her left, as she discoursed of friends in all of whose households, apparently, a butler was as indispensable as a door-bell.

It was nearly half past nine when they got away from the table, and Pollyanna realized with dismay that she was sleepy. While regretfully acknowledging the probability that her drowsiness was in part due to overeating, in self-defense she told herself that Mrs. Van Zant's conversation was distinctly soporific in its effect. She was talking now of a French countess with whom she was seemingly on intimate terms, and the story was so like all the other stories of the evening that it was impossible to be interested in it. Pollyanna glancing at Jimmy, met his eye, and knew instantly that he was suffering from her malady. Jimmy, too, was bored to the point of finding it hard to keep awake.

For the next two hours Pollyanna had little idea what her guest was saying. Occasionally through the cloud that obscured her brain, fragments of Mrs. Van Zant's reminiscences penetrated to her understanding. "She married a Russian prince, and lived in such elegance." "And I said. 'Really, Lord Raleigh.'" Pollyanna could not keep her brain clear, but she succeeded, against almost overwhelming odds, in keeping her eyes open. She thought of

bed as a Peri might think of the joys of a lost Paradise. Her fancy played with the possibility of throwing herself down on the couch, on the floor, anywhere so as to be prostrate, when she roused herself to look at Jimmy. She saw upon his face an expression of agony, revealing that he was suffering as acutely as she herself, but Pollyanna was too far gone to feel more than a faint stirring of sympathy.

She had been fearful that when Mrs. Van Zant at length announced her intention of leaving, it would be necessary for Jimmy to wake her, if he were still capable of performing that duty. But the announcement revived her like a breath of cold air. She got to her feet with alacrity, though murmuring the polite protests which custom dictates regardless of the hour. And she led the way upstairs, while Mrs. Van Zant meandered on, "Yes, in our set, one gets into the way of keeping terribly late hours. When I am living in New York, after the opera the first question is always; 'Now what shall we do to amuse ourselves till bed-time?' No one thinks of retiring till three or four in the morning. But, of course, no one thinks of rising before noon."

Pollyanna, muttering something inane regarding the nocturnal habits of Mrs. Van Zant's New York friends, stood looking on, as her guest

pulled a little close-fitting hat down over her ears. Then as Mrs. Van Zant turned to take up her coat, Pollyanna moved forward to assist her. Unfortunately, Mrs. Van Zant reached it first.

The air was full of shrieks, horrible, piercing. The bed was covered with cats, pouncing, frisking, scampering in every direction. It was a nightmare, of course. Pollyanna decided she had gone to sleep while Mrs. Van Zant was talking, and the nightmare was her punishment. But now it was time to wake up, for Mrs. Van Zant was standing on a chair, and Jimmy and Mr. Van Zant were tearing up the stairs.

From behind the fur collar of the elaborate evening wrap, a perplexed feline face peered out, white except for a black smootch across the nose. "Smudge!" gasped Pollyanna, and understood. The six-toed cat, with her unerring instinct for the best, had conducted her family to the guest-room, and ensconced them for the evening on Mrs. Van Zant's coat.

The men were in the room. Mr. Van Zant rushed to the aid of his stricken wife. The six-toed cat followed her fleeing off-spring. Jimmy turned a horrified face on Pollyanna. "How did it happen?"

"I don't know. They were locked in the laundry at six o'clock." Pollyanna was never to learn the

solution of the mystery, for to the end of her days, Nancy vowed that the laundry door was locked throughout the evening. "Them six-toed cats," Nancy hinted darkly, "They've got ways of their own of gettin' *what* they want an' *where* they want."

However the thing had happened, the mischief was done. Mr. Van Zant assisted his wife down the stairs, and Jimmy carried the coat after her. Pollyanna brought up the rear, feeling and looking like the tragic muse. She remembered Jimmy had said that Mr. Van Zant's good will might be helpful to a young man. The expensive, elaborate dinner had been designed to promote his liking. And this grotesque ending of the evening was death to his hopes.

It was impossible to take formal leave of a lady in hysterics. Mr. Van Zant bundled his wife out of the house, and Jimmy carried her wrap to the car. Pollyanna, left behind, wrung her hands. And when after a seemingly interminable interval, she heard Jimmy's step on the porch, she had to fight an unreasonable desire to run away and hide.

Jimmy walked into the room and dropped into an arm chair. Without looking in his direction Pollyanna began to stammer her regrets.

"Jimmy, I'm terribly sorry. You can't think how sorry I am. I thought—"

She checked herself in terror. A strange sound was emanating from the arm chair, and for a moment she thought that Jimmy's anguish was finding solace in tears. In an instant she grasped the blessed truth. He was laughing.

"I know it's a shame," gasped Jimmy, when he could find breath, "but I never saw anything funnier. Cats everywhere. Like stepping on a nest of snakes and starting them in all directions."

He went off into another paroxysm of laughter, and Pollyanna joined him. They laughed till they were out of breath, till their chests and sides ached, and the tears ran down their cheeks. They laughed till they felt weak, till they panted and wheezed and moaned softly, and dared not look at each other, for fear of making things worse. And when at last the quiet of exhaustion was getting the better of their insane mirth, Pollyanna spoke in a feeble little voice.

"Jimmy, aren't you glad that we've both got a sense of humor?"

CHAPTER XVII

A GOOD TURN

"HELLO!"

"Hello! I'd like to speak to Mrs. Pendleton, please."

Something wheezed along the wire and then exploded in a derisive cackle. Pollyanna was trying to laugh, and encountering unexpected difficulties. When she had finished coughing, she croaked, "Thank you for not knowing who was speaking. I consider it a compliment."

"Pollyanna Pendleton," gasped Lorraine, at last recognizing something familiar in the hoarse, unmusical voice. "How did you get such a cold?"

"I don't know, and what is worse, I don't know how to get rid of it. I guess it's a mild form of grippe, for it's going through the family."

"Do you mean that the others are sick, too?"

"Well, Junior is out of bed today, but he feels weak and miserable. Judy wasn't nearly as sick. She hasn't been in bed at all, but she has a hard cough. Poor Nancy had to give up yesterday after-

noon, and I thought at breakfast that Jimmy didn't have his usual appetite."

It was a long speech from one suffering from Pollyanna's ailment. She stopped of necessity and coughed as if she were never going to stop. And Lorraine Chalmers, wincing at her end of the wire as the rasping sounds beat a tattoo on her ear-drums, drew a mental sketch of the situation—the man of the house in the city, Nancy in bed, and Pollyanna, disregarding her disabilities, struggling bravely to perform the duties of nurse and maid-of-all-work.

When Pollyanna regained sufficient breath to whisper "Excuse me," Lorraine ignored the apology.

"Why, you poor thing. Then everything falls on you. Aren't any of your friends coming in to help you?"

"No." There was no uncertainty in Pollyanna's negative. "Mrs. Warner and Mrs. McGill offered to come, but both of them have children and I won't be responsible for their being laid up. I think the worst is over," she ended with determined hopefulness. "I'm sure we'll all be better by tomorrow."

Lorraine hesitated. It had been so long since she had performed a self-forgetful service, that on the point of making the offer, she drew back. The words on her lips changed magically into something

quite different. "I called you up to scold you for not coming to see me, but now I understand how it is. I hope Mr. Pendleton will come home early and relieve you."

"I'm afraid he can't. They happen to be especially busy just now. That's why I let him go this morning without making any protest, though I really think he should be at home, taking care of himself."

"Pollyanna," Lorraine exclaimed, "I'm coming over." With a sudden shame she remembered how Pollyanna had come to her assistance at the time of her father's illness, and that she could have called on her in the middle of the night, and been sure of her immediate response. For years Lorraine had considered herself absolved from all the homely duties of neighborliness. Her chronic condition of self-pity was unfavorable to the recognition of responsibility. But remembrance was too much for her. Even when her father was ill, she had three well-trained servants at her beck and call, and while the situation in the Pendleton household was less serious, Pollyanna was meeting it single-handed. Shame and gratitude spurred her on to the declaration she would have thought incredible under different circumstances, "I'm coming over."

Pollyanna's contradictory emotions found ex-

pression in an incoherent sputter. Under other circumstances she would have been altogether elated. She had a feeling that if Lorraine once broke through the morbid inhibitions she had imposed on herself, she would make rapid progress toward normal womanhood. It cost her a tremendous effort not to accept the offer on the spot, but conscience demanded some sort of protest. Moreover though it came as a second thought, it occurred to Pollyanna that it would hardly be politic to appear so concerned for the health of Mrs. Warner and Mrs. McGill, and indifferent to the possibility that Lorraine might contract her malady.

Though she had had time to weigh the arguments for and against accepting Lorraine's offer, she had thought quickly, and there was a hardly perceptible pause before she said, "Lorraine, that's perfectly darling of you. But I don't want you to come over here and catch the grippe. I can get on very well by myself."

"I never catch anything, but if this should prove an exception, there are plenty of people to take care of me. And if I should be very sick and die, it would be the best thing that could possibly happen."

"Oh, Lorraine!" Pollyanna's jubilant certainty that Lorraine's offer showed a vast improvement in her condition, suffered an immediate eclipse. With-

out giving her a chance to say more, Lorraine announced, "I'll be over in five minutes, Pollyanna. Goodbye." The click of her receiver back in place, told that the conversation was at an end, and Pollyanna turned away, her mental barometer again rising. While she felt quite able to dispense with Lorraine's assistance, the offer was a step in the right direction. The prospect of having her neighbor in her home, even under circumstances the reverse of propitious, was more exhilarating than the strongest tonic. Pollyanna rushed about, removing a little of the most obvious dust, but with her eye on the window, so that she should know as soon as Lorraine started to cross the street.

Lorraine, having donned rain-coat and galoshes, appeared in the kitchen in search of oranges, and the chicken soup left from the dinner of the previous day. Lorraine was always on her dignity with her servants, who consequently were always on their dignity with her, but as she appeared dressed for outdoors, the cook could not refrain from protesting. "You're not going out on a day like this, are you, Miss Chalmers?"

"Certainly."

"You don't want to get wet, with all the colds that are going around just now."

"I think my health is probably equal to crossing the street on a rainy day," said Lorraine coldly. "Now if you'll put that soup in a quart jar, Mary, and screw the lid on tight. I'm not nearly as afraid of a spattering of rain as I am of a spattering of chicken soup. And by the way, Mary, I shall probably be at Mrs. Pendleton's for luncheon."

She crossed the street, holding her umbrella low so as to hide her face, and unaware that from an upper front window of her home, two pairs of eyes followed her movements, the watchers as thrilled as were the spectators who saw Horatius swim the Tiber. And even after the Pendleton front door had opened to admit her, Emma and Mary remained upstairs, discussing various conjectures which might explain this extraordinary move on the part of Miss Lorraine.

Pollyanna found that she had underestimated the advantage of having assistance. The warmth of her greeting was altogether disinterested. But when Lorraine attacked the piles of dishes stacked on the kitchen table till the tired mistress of the house should have time to attend to them, Pollyanna was astonished to find her eyes suddenly moist.

Her protest was faint-hearted, though she tried to atone for that by using emphatic language. "It's really an outrage, your beautiful hands in

my greasy dish-water. And you never have to do such things at home."

"Then it's time my hands were doing something useful," said Lorraine. She had the dexterity which is the natural endowment of certain people and she dispatched the unfamiliar work with a rapidity that surprised the beneficiary. When the dishes were out of the way, it was time to prepare luncheon, a rather complicated task, as nearly everyone had to have a different *menu*. Lorraine was gratified by Pollyanna's heartfelt appreciation of her chicken soup. Pollyanna carried a cup of it to Nancy, who took nearly a half of it—the first she had eaten in twenty-four hours—and declared that it "went to the right spot."

A little after two o'clock there was a lull. Little Ruth, who so far had escaped the infection, was taking her nap, smiling in her sleep, as if seeing beautiful things invisible to waking eyes. Junior, easily tired after two days of fever, crawled up on the couch and he, too, dropped off to sleep. Judy was playing quietly in the corner. The house was in order and the vegetables prepared for dinner. "Will you do me a favor?" Lorraine asked Pollyanna.

"A favor, after the way you have come to my

rescue today? You shall have anything you ask for, to the half of my kingdom."

"I want you to go upstairs and take a little rest."

As is often the case with those who make large promises, Pollyanna at once began hedging. "Why, I'm not especially tired." She followed up the misleading statement with a yawn so prodigious that the average person would have felt embarrassed, but Pollyanna was equal to the occasion.

"That's all your fault, for talking about being tired. You know that dreadful advertisement, don't you, where a child is yawning. The minute I see it, my mouth opens like the Gates Ajar, and I have the worst time to get it shut."

"Well, you're to shut it right now," Lorraine said firmly. "Don't suppose I'm taken in by all this palaver. Go and lie down for an hour. I'll call you at half past three. And if you're needed, I'll call you earlier."

Now that the thing was put squarely before her, Pollyanna found the temptation irresistible. "You certainly are an angel," she declared fervently. "I feel as if I were taking an unfair advantage of good nature." But even as she protested, she was moving toward the stairs. "There are several new magazines on the table," she murmured, "and there's a new book—"

"Don't bother," Lorraine interposed. "I'll find something entertaining. And if you don't hurry, you'll fall asleep on your feet."

Pollyanna went on up the stairs with a dragging step, quite out of character. Once in her room, she threw herself upon the bed, and literally was asleep as soon as her head touched the pillow. Lorraine found a magazine and sat down where she could watch the clock. She hated the idea of waking Pollyanna in a little over an hour, but she did not dare postpone it longer. Even if he were busy, Mr. Pendleton, knowing the state of affairs, was likely to make an effort to come home early and she felt it would be unsafe to postpone her departure beyond mid-afternoon. As she read, her attention was divided about equally between the brisk minute hand and the pages of the magazine.

Her reading was interrupted when Jiggs walked up to her, looked her in the face and gave a soft insinuating bark. He waited expectantly and then as she did not move, he barked again, this time in quite a different manner. The second bark was loud and peremptory.

Lorraine dropped her magazine. "Oh, you bad dog, be quiet. Be quiet, I say. You'll wake your mistress."

Over in the corner, Judy looked up from her play. "He's trying to tell you something."

"What do you mean?"

"He's trying to tell you that he wants to take a walk. That's the way he barks when he wants somebody to open the door for him. I guess you don't understand dog talk very well, do you?"

"Not very well," said Lorraine with fitting humility. Acting on Judy's suggestion, she promptly opened the back door, and Jiggs scrambled past her into the rain. As she closed the door after him, she noted that the clock was striking three.

At that moment the front door opened and shut, and a voice called, "Pollyanna." Lorraine gave a terrified start. Mr. Pendleton had come home, and at three o'clock instead of five-thirty, when his wife expected him. As a dead silence followed his call, he spoke again, "Pollyanna."

"Sh!" warned another masculine voice. "The boy's asleep on the couch. Don't wake him."

If Lorraine had been dismayed at the sound of James Pendleton's voice, the discovery that he was not alone brought her perturbation to the point of sheer panic. She was standing in a narrow passageway between the kitchen and the dining-room, and beside her was a door leading into a shallow closet, where Pollyanna kept the vacuum cleaner, broom,

mops and dusters. Like a scared rabbit, bolting into an unfamiliar burrow, Lorraine shot into the closet and shut the door upon herself.

Steps passed, and Lorraine shivering, clutched the knob of the door, resolved to hold it against all comers. But as it never occurred to Jimmy to look for his wife in the broom closet, he merely walked past the door again, after satisfying himself that Pollyanna was not in the kitchen. And then Lorraine heard Judy's flute-like voice explaining, "Mother's lying down."

"Is she sick?" Jimmy asked in alarm, and Lorraine, her heart pounding, waited for the seemingly inevitable disclosure of her presence in the house. But Judy's answer when it came, made no reference to the part Lorraine had played in sending Pollyanna to bed. "She was sleepy." Judy explained and let it go at that.

"Let her have her nap out, poor girl," said the other voice, whose nearness quickened Lorraine's pulses so that she had a feeling of suffocation. "Isn't there some place downstairs where you can lie down. I'll hold the fort in the meantime."

"I don't need to lie down. For Heaven's sake, stop regarding me as an invalid. Even if I were sick—which I'm not—I couldn't go to bed for Pollyanna to take care of."

"Well, there's no harm in lying down while I'm here to look after things," said the other voice diplomatically.

And then Pollyanna herself broke in on the conversation. "Why Jimmy—why, Frank. Where—when did you come?"

"Came in just a minute ago," Jimmy replied. And then moved, Lorraine guessed, by the expression of his wife's face, he added gently, "Needn't look so scared, dear. Everything's all right."

"But—but—it's not time, is it?" Pollyanna stammered inanely, and Lorraine alone of the three who listened, knew the reason for her consternation. It was Frank who answered her. "No, it's not time but Jim seems a little under the weather and I thought I'd bring him home. If I were you I'd take his temperature and see—"

"Oh, shut up," Jimmy roared. "I refuse to have my temperature taken. I'll bite the thermometer in two if anybody attempts such a thing." He added in a tone of exasperation, "Don't look so worried, Sweetheart. Confound it all, Frank, what's the use of frightening her after the day she's had."

"I'm sorry," said the young man contritely. "I don't think there's any reason to be worried. Only it's sensible to take care of yourself, if you—"

Jimmy interrupted. "What's the matter, Polly-

anna? What are you looking for? Have you lost something?"

"No-o," said Pollyanna. As a matter of fact, she had just *found* something, Lorraine's raincoat, thrown over the back of a chair. "Let's go into the living-room," she suggested. "And now what's this about your being sick, Jimmy? It's no good fighting off the grippe, you know."

"You're a good one to talk," jeered Jimmy. And then to the ears of the voluntary prisoner, came the sound of footsteps growing fainter, and voices less and less distinct, till finally cut off altogether by the closing of the door.

Lorraine understood that this was her opportunity. She thrust her head from her cell, looked this way and that, and finding the coast clear made her exit by way of the back door. She was in too great a hurry to stop for such trifles as raincoat or umbrella, and she dashed out into the storm, her only thought, relief in making her escape. But Emma, who saw her coming up the walk, dripping like a nymph in a fountain, was aghast as she rushed to open the door.

"Oh, Miss Lorraine. Oh my goodness, ain't you soaking wet! Wherever is your umbrella?"

As no adequate explanation occurred to Lorraine, she did not answer, but walked with quiet dignity to

the stairs and on up to her room, leaving a trail of moisture which the least observant of sleuths could follow. For a few minutes the removal of her wet clothing and the donning of dry, occupied the surface of her thoughts, though underneath a tumultuous riot of feelings threatened her self-control. The sound of her lover's voice, the fact that for a little she had been close to him, even though he was unaware of her proximity, had brought back the old anguish and the older joy, blended in a palpitating emotion that each moment gained force like a pent-up stream.

"How much he thinks of Pollyanna," Lorraine stared at her reflection in the glass, her mouth twisting in the mockery of a smile. "Anyone can see how much he admires her. And then he's so anxious to spare her in every way. I'm sure I can play Pollyanna's game, and be glad that he has such a good friend."

And with this brave sentiment, she flung herself upon the bed, and gave herself up to the luxury of tears.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE VANISHING LADY

WHILE Lorraine lay weeping, Pollyanna was doing her best to carry on a conversation under the handicap of listening not merely to what Jimmy and Frank were saying, but for some sound indicating that Lorraine had taken advantage of the opportunity to make her escape. She had no idea of the girl's hiding-place. The good news she was longing to impart to Frank was forced to wait, since, for all she knew, Lorraine might be within hearing of her voice. Often as they had mentioned Lindsay's name, Lorraine had never hinted that once they had been friends, and until she should receive her confidence, Pollyanna thought best to conceal the fact that he had been more communicative.

Pollyanna possessed a single-track mind, no disadvantage in the long run, though inconvenient on occasions. This was one of the times when she longed for the ability to talk of one thing, while thinking of something else. As she listened vainly for the slamming door which would convey the

news of Lorraine's departure, her share of the conversation became less and less animated and to the point. When at length in answer to a direct question, she replied with something altogether irelevant, Jimmy regarded her with real anxiety.

"Feel all right, don't you, dear? How's your head?"

Pollyanna perceived that the thing had gone far enough. "Fine," she answered hastily. "Excuse me just a minute. There's something I must look after in the kitchen."

Though she had heard no sound indicating that Lorraine had withdrawn, she must have been more certain than she realized that her visitor was gone, for the sight of Lorraine's raincoat, still reposing on a dining-room chair, and her umbrella, still demurely occupying a corner, was a distinct shock. Their presence seemed proof of Lorraine's failure to appreciate that the coast was clear. She must, then, be somewhere about the house. The question was—where?

Pollyanna began a thorough search, a needlessly thorough search, indeed, for after she had examined the closets and gone through the cellar, giving especial attention to the coal bins, she gave a hasty inspection of the laundry tubs, and the refrigerator, despite the obvious fact that an upstanding young

woman like Lorraine could not possibly have taken advantage of either place of concealment. She went upstairs and continued her search with the same thoroughness, peering under beds, looking behind garments hanging in closets and wardrobes, and conquering only after an effort, the impulse to examine the bureau drawers. Little Ruth awoke as her mother closed a door a shade too emphatically, and stood up in her crib, laughing and dimpling over her delight in being awake again. But for once Pollyanna was too busy to give her offspring her admiring attention.

Only the living-room was left, and the thought that Lorraine might be concealed in the living-room was distinctly disquieting. The only closet was long and low, running back under the stairs. Even Pollyanna could not stand upright in that closet, and if Lorraine had sought shelter there, she was either standing in a back-breaking posture, or sitting on the floor.

Pollyanna realized the importance of settling the question promptly. If Lorraine was hidden in the closet, the men must be tolled to another part of the house without delay. She came nonchalantly down stairs with an old coat on her arm, the coat to serve as an excuse for going to the closet. Stepping inside,

she bumped her head smartly. She saw stars in plenty, but no Lorraine.

At this point Jimmy was moved to remonstrate. "What on earth are you looking for, Pollyanna? Don't keep running upstairs and down, unless it's absolutely necessary."

Pollyanna did not reply. She was growing really alarmed. As far as she could see, Lorraine was not in the house, yet it was difficult to believe that she had left, in the face of the mute evidence of the raincoat and umbrella. She went to the phone in the hall, and gave Lorraine's number. Emma's familiar voice answered.

"Is Miss Lorraine in?" As she asked the question, Pollyanna pictured the consternation it would evoke, provided Lorraine had left home saying she was going to Mrs. Pendleton's, and had not yet returned. But the startled exclamation she half expected to hear, was not forthcoming. Instead Emma replied apologetically, "Well, yes, Mrs. Pendleton. She's in, but I don't know as she can talk to you just now. She came in wetter'n any drowned rat you ever set your eyes on."

"Wet! Oh dear!"

"Yes'm," said Emma, with a certain lugubrious enjoyment of the news, "Drippin', soakin', squizzlin' wet she was, hair and all. She's up-

stairs now, dryin' off, like Noah's dove, poor soul."

Pollyanna sighed. "Well, it's too late to help it now, but I can't see why she did such a foolish thing. After she comes downstairs, tell her I called."

Pollyanna hung up the receiver and turned to face a pale and anxious young man. "What about Lorraine?" He demanded.

She had no intention of telling him all that had happened unless it proved absolutely necessary. Intuition told her it would be anything but gratifying to a lover to know that the lady of his heart had rushed out into a drenching rain to avoid him. Characteristically she began with the good news. "She was here today."

"Here? In this house?"

"Yes. She called me on the phone, and when she found Nancy was in bed, she offered to come and help me. Wasn't that sweet of her? Because you know, it meant overcoming so much shrinking, like an ordinary girl's offering herself as a nurse in a leper colony."

"When did she go home?"

"Well, I don't know exactly. She was here several hours—in fact she had luncheon with me. And she washed more dishes, I'll venture to say, than she ever did in her life before."

"What did you mean about her getting wet?"

Pollyanna's usually musical laugh had been sadly altered by her cold, and exasperation did not improve it. "Franklin Lindsay, if tenacity helps people to get ahead, you will certainly be president of the United States. Lorraine got wet going home from here."

"Why didn't she borrow an umbrella?"

"She slipped away before I knew it, or I would have insisted on her taking one."

It looked as if the catechism were over. Lindsay sighed and was turning to go back to the front door, when Judy put in a word. "She went home 'thout her umbrella."

Lindsay's eyes followed the gaze of the observant child. He saw not only the tell-tale umbrella, but the gay colored raincoat thrown over a dining-room chair, and the business-like galoshes, side by side, as if ready to start off. "Are they yours?" he asked, interpreting his inquiry by a little nod, in the direction of Lorraine's abandoned property.

"No."

"I see. She heard my voice and ran out into the storm to avoid me. If it had been a prairie fire, instead of a rain storm she'd have run into that, I suppose, rather than face me."

"Now you're talking foolishly," Pollyanna chided

him. "You're letting yourself get disheartened, when I've just told you the most encouraging thing that's happened since she's been here."

Lindsay did not challenge her statement. Instead he ignored it. "Sometimes I think I'd better go to the ends of the earth, and leave her in peace. Once I hoped to make her the happiest woman in the world. I've given up all idea of that. But at least I might refrain from adding to her misery."

Again Pollyanna's protests fell on deaf ears. He kept on talking as if she had not spoken.

"If I had strength of will enough to keep away from this house, things would be better. We could fix up a story for you to tell her about our quarreling, or something like that. But I haven't got enough sand. As long as I'm in this vicinity, I'll be running to you with the story of my woes. The best thing for me to do is to get a job in Hongkong or Buenos Aires and stay there till I'm fifty."

"What are you two plotting all this time?" called Jimmy from the living-room. "If it's about my having the doctor, please understand that I won't do it." And Pollyanna found it a relief to turn her attention from putting heart into a discouraged lover, to soothing a fretful husband.

Since he was so soon to leave for Hongkong or

some other distant point, Frank apparently had resolved to make himself useful in the interval. He stayed to dinner, after Pollyanna had assured him that owing to the fever-blasted appetites of the family, there was more than a sufficiency. He encouraged Pollyanna to eat a good dinner, by setting her a good example, and later drove her from the kitchen and washed the dishes himself. At nine o'clock, after viewing the down-pour which could be seen to great advantage as illumined by the nearest street lamp, he announced that he had no intention of going out in such a deluge, and that with Pollyanna's permission he would spend the night on the davenport. Pollyanna understanding perfectly his sudden sensitiveness in regard to weather, gave him a grateful smile along with permission to remain. "I'll miss you terribly," she said, "when you go to Hongkong."

Lindsay grinned rather sheepishly. "You think I'm joking. But honestly there are times when I feel like chucking everything and getting as far away from here as I can."

"It's no time to run away just when things are looking up. A few months ago she couldn't have been dragged inside a neighbor's home. If you're so anxious to see Hongkong, take it in on your wedding trip."

In the morning Jimmy's head ached so savagely that Pollyanna had little difficulty in persuading him to lie quiet. But Nancy came downstairs at the usual hour, looking rather wan, but protesting that she was fully able to do her work. Junior, too, seemed quite himself and proved his convalescence by eating an enormous breakfast. Pollyanna looked pale and owned to having coughed a good part of the night, but she, too, was ready for her breakfast, and Lindsay's anxiety lessened as he watched her. To his great disgust he had made an engagement for the evening. But he assured Pollyanna that he was ready to break it at the last minute, if she found she needed him.

"I'm inclined to think Jim's headache a good thing. It keeps him quiet and probably that's all he needs, to be as fit as ever in two or three days. But you have my telephone number, and if he's worse, or if you need me for any reason, just call me. You know I'll be more than glad to come. It's a pleasure to feel there's somebody on earth to whom I can be of service."

"I'll call you anyway," said Pollyanna, "after I've talked with Lorraine. I'd rather not call up while you're here, for it might make her suspicious, but of course, you're as anxious as I am, to know whether she took cold or not."

Lindsay left on the train Jimmy usually took and Pollyanna went at once to the telephone. Lorraine herself answered the ring, and Pollyanna breathed a sigh of relief.

"Oh dear, I'm so glad to hear your voice. I was so afraid you'd be sick with a cold this morning. Why did you do it, Lorraine?"

"Sh!"

"Oh, it's all right. Jimmy's upstairs asleep, and Mr. Lindsay left a few minutes ago. I couldn't sleep much last night for coughing, and I spent my time worrying about you. It seemed dreadful that when you had run the risk of coming here where everyone is sick, you should have taken an extra risk in getting a soaking."

"I did lose my head," Lorraine owned, after a moment. "It only shows that I made a mistake in breaking my rule, no matter what the emergency."

"Your mistake is not in breaking your rule once, but in not keeping on breaking it."

"I'm afraid we'd never agree on that point. Is Nancy up today?"

"Yes, she's dragging around and pretending to feel a great deal stronger than she really does."

"I'm so glad. I'm going to have Mary make more of that chicken soup, Pollyanna, and I'll send it

over by Martin. And if you'll give him my things—"

"Of course."

"I'm going to make him think I loaned them to you. Of course the girls may tell him differently. I suppose they are talking me over the moment I am out of hearing."

"If no one ever says any unkinder things about you than those two say," cried Pollyanna, "you'll be lucky."

"I suppose I shouldn't care what they say—but I do. I used to pride myself on my poise a century or so ago. Now I lose my head and do absurd things. It's a bit humiliating. But I won't keep you any longer. Come and see me as soon as you can."

"And till I can, come and see me."

Lorraine's sigh was audible. "Never again," she said with finality and rang off, before Pollyanna could answer. And perhaps it was just as well since for the time being Pollyanna could think of nothing to say.

CHAPTER XIX

PAULA NEEDS A FRIEND

James Carew was having trouble with his secretary. He was inclined to regard this as the last straw, and considering his recent meritorious conduct, distinctly unfair. For since under the spur of Pollyanna's plain words, he had gone to the drastic length of scrapping a half-finished novel, his troubles had been legion.

To begin with, his publishers had been disagreeably surprised to learn that the novel they expected to publish in the spring, would not be ready before June at the earliest. They found it difficult to reconcile this state of affairs with the entirely optimistic reports of his progress he had given them from time to time. Their courteous letters, reminding him that "Growing Pains" had been published in May, and urging him to follow up that success as promptly as possible, breathed a chastened resignation to the inevitable. And resignation was a very unsatisfactory substitute for enthusiasm, in James' opinion.

Other more personal trials were far more serious. Had he finished his book, he would have been ready to rid his mind of everything that concerned it, as one sweeps the sawdust and shavings from a finished house. But as he destroyed the manuscript without carrying it through to its natural conclusion, he lacked the sense of being done with the thing. The unsolved problems vexed him. The characters left dangling in mid-air, haunted his dreams. For his new book he had chosen a theme he had had in mind for some time, but he was finding it hard to become interested in its development. The characters, as if resenting his temporary aberration, refused to do anything as he wanted it done. They would not act naturally and spontaneously, but waited like puppets for him to pull the string. With each new chapter James seriously considered burning this second fragmentary manuscript, and taking up life insurance in place of authorship. For these reasons he felt he was paying a sufficiently high price for a conscientious action, without having Miss Merrill add to his difficulties.

But in this crisis when he needed all the assistance possible, Miss Merrill was hardly recognizable as her old-time efficient self. He

had always boasted that she was quick as well as correct, intuitive as well as dependable. Now she was none of these things. She was no better than the everyday, lip-stick variety of secretary, her mind running on pleasures past or to come. If he gave her dictation, which he did occasionally, when he had something carefully thought out, she brought it to him sprinkled with extraordinary words, words he could not possibly have used. And when she copied a penciled manuscript, or even a typed manuscript, savagely corrected, she was as likely as not to hand it in with a paragraph or two missing. James did not always recognize what had happened, when he came to a hiatus in the sense, and even when he knew that something essential had been eliminated, he could not always remember what it was. On such occasions the impulse to tear his hair was almost irresistible.

Sadie looked at him anxiously one evening as he groaned aloud over a page of copy which though neatly typed, proved to have the rather serious defect of being unintelligible in spots. "What is it, dear?" she questioned tenderly. Sadie had never been in sympathy with the destruction of the manuscript. Her advice was to postpone turning over a new leaf, till the book

was finished and in the publisher's hands. Her husband's increasing nervousness, apparent to everyone, but doubly to herself, confirmed her in the certainty that her advice had been good. "What is it, dear?" she said again, as he did not speak.

James was just tired enough and discouraged enough to find confidence a relief. "I don't know what's got into that girl. She doesn't seem to use her head any more. I'll be hanged if I know what I was trying to say on this page."

"I think it's very evident what's got into her. I always thought it was a mistake to keep her, knowing what you do."

James scowled at the point of his pencil. "Let's not go into that again. I did the right thing, as I thought, and I'm not sorry. But it's disappointing to have her like this when she's always been so dependable."

"I suppose she has other more interesting things to think of," Sadie said significantly, and left him to digest that at his leisure.

It was indeed true that Paula had something else to think about, and the distraction of her thoughts was responsible for the shortcomings which so perplexed her employer. Her encounter with Lloyd Woodward the afternoon when

Lindsay drove her home, had been one of those chances fraught with noteworthy consequences. Though he had asked if he might call during the week, by Monday morning Paula was inclined to discount the likelihood of seeing him again. Indeed her thoughts were so engrossed by her forth-coming interview with Gerald Fox, that nothing else seemed worthy of consideration.

Just what she would say to Fox, or what he was likely to say to her, Paula did not know. But one thing was certain, that the romantic venture of Saturday had become a disquieting memory by Monday morning. Her feeling toward Fox had changed surprisingly, and she guessed that he would realize this, as soon as he heard her voice, and resent it intensely.

All that day and the next she jumped nervously whenever the phone rang, and as on each occasion she found that the speaker was not Fox, she experienced an emotion midway between relief and resentment. And when on Wednesday morning Lloyd called her, she was not sure whether she was pleased or disappointed that it was not the other man. But she decided it was a fitting punishment for his inexplicable delay, that if Fox should ask to see her Thursday eve-

ning, she could reply with truth that she had an engagement for Thursday.

Lloyd came at the appointed time, and in the cramped reception room of the boarding-house, seemed so superior to his surroundings as to make Paula certain he would never come again. When he invited her to go to the theatre with him the following week, she was as agreeably surprised as when she heard his voice over the telephone, and knew he was really coming to call.

These surprises continued with growing frequency. He came to see her. He took her to the theatre, especially the first week in the month, shortly after pay-day, and later on, to the movies. When he was flush, they dined at some very good restaurants, but for times of financial stringency, he knew of places where he could make a glass of lemonade last an evening, with dancing between the sips. And Paula liked it all. The thing that counted, she discovered, had nothing to do with the cost of things. It was Lloyd himself, his gay spirits, his comradeship.

The silence of Gerald Fox, which at first had seemed inexplicable, unendurable, even, gradually ceased to matter. Paula stopped thinking about him. She was young enough so that she experienced little difficulty in closing the door in

the face of unpleasant thoughts. At the present she had something extremely pleasant to occupy her thoughts. For as Lloyd's calls became more frequent, his invitations more numerous, Paula thrilled over the certainty that Lloyd Woodward was falling in love with her.

Naïvely she assumed that nothing more wonderful could happen. It was true that Lloyd was a young man on a small salary, but to Paula the Woodwards of Greenfield were the embodiment of aristocracy. The Woodward men generally went into the professions, medicine or law, for the most part, and Lloyd had an uncle who was a professor in a State University. Lloyd's own preference for business would have met with united family opposition, had he belonged to his grandfather's generation. Living as he did at the end of the first quarter of the Twentieth Century, no one opposed him in his choice, though his mother had been disappointed.

There had been no professional people among the Merrills. Paula's father owned a little store, so inefficiently managed that although he and his wife did the work between them, it never yielded more than a bare living for the family. When Paula graduated from high school at sixteen, she had started out by disappointing the

expectations of her parents that she would take her place behind the counter.

"I've seen how hard it is for you to get hold of a dollar when you needed it," she told her mother, with that plainness of speech characteristic of the new generation. "Dad would never pay me a real salary. I expect to earn my living, but I'm going to do it in my own way."

She had taken the business course in high school, and though stenographic positions were not numerous in Greenfield, she succeeded in securing one almost immediately. Several homely girls of the class, less successful than she, thought they knew the reason why. But Paula had no intention of settling down in Greenfield. After six months, she had come to the city, and found work without difficulty, though the salary was small. When James Carew advertised for a secretary, Paula applied, and was accepted. If her beauty had influenced James' decision more than he realized, her work justified his choice. For the first time, Paula felt herself in a position worthy of her. She found everything absorbingly interesting, and made no complaint of the rather irregular hours to which an author's secretary is likely to be subjected.

Almost the first discovery Paula had made in the city was the worthlessness of the standards she had always accepted. That part of her wardrobe of which she was proudest was most impossible. A younger sister was astonished to receive by parcel-post a number of garments practically new. Paula was observant and adaptable. Many a society leader, quite unconscious of the service she was rendering, gave her valuable hints on how to dress, how to carry herself, and how to wear her clothes. And having satisfied herself of the inadequacy of Greenfield standards in one thing, she was inclined to question others she had unthinkingly accepted.

Paula Merrill had always been what is known as a good girl. Her parents congratulated themselves that she had never given them "any trouble," though, as is frequently the case, her morality was less a matter of conviction than of conformity. Her life in the city opened her eyes to the fact that people did not think alike about conduct, any more than they did about clothes. Her associates in her first place of employment startled her by their candid discussion of topics she had supposed settled once for all. She was shocked, as well as startled, but she soon learned

to hide her feelings, as indicating a lack of sophistication.

In the boarding-house she read for the first time those magazines in which sex is exploited with the frankness of a clinic, and passion is exalted as the *sine qua non* of existence. She read it all with absorbing interest, but at the same time, judicially. There was a fastidious streak in her which was revolted by the frank brutality of much of this stuff. It took James Carew's heroine, Mrs. Rutledge, to lend to this sordid animality beauty and glamor.

It was not like the mere reading of a book, however powerful. For months Paula had lived in the society of Mrs. Rutledge in a closer intimacy than is possible between two human beings, since Paula knew not only what Mrs. Rutledge did and said, but also what she thought. She had typed the arguments Mrs. Rutledge had used in defending her course again and again, as the author omitted an adjective that weakened the effect, or inserted a more expressive noun. By the time she knew them by heart, they had begun to seem extremely reasonable, and illicit love, instead of being a thing to shrink from with aversion, had taken on the charm of romance. When Gerald Fox appeared on the scene, he fitted into

the scheme of things like the missing part of a dissected picture puzzle.

Then came Lloyd, and the topsy-turvy world righted by degrees. Without reasoning about it, without exactly knowing what was happening, Paula went back to the standards of her home. She ceased to resent Fox's silence. She stopped thinking about him. Lloyd filled her thoughts, Lloyd with his boyish face and frank eyes, Lloyd into whose voice crept at times inflections of entrancing tenderness.

Then one night as she and Lloyd came out of one of the city's theatres, a suave voice said: "Good evening, Miss Merrill," and a well-dressed young man smiled at her impressively, as he lifted his hat. The girl went cold. Her greeting hardly audible, was spoken without a smile, and as she stared at him, her eyes widened with fear. Why, she hated him, and once, not a century ago, though it seemed so, she had thought she loved him with a love which—to quote Mrs. Rutledge—"justified everything."

"Who is that grinning guy?" Lloyd asked gruffly. Intuitively he had felt her recoil.

She tried to erase all emotion from her voice. "His name is Fox."

"Don't like his looks. If I'm any judge, you want to steer clear of him."

Again she struggled to speak casually. "Oh, I haven't seen him for an age."

The next day Fox called her on the phone and suggested her meeting him for luncheon. She refused primly, and over the wire she heard his low laughter.

"Angry at me, are you, girlie? I'm sorry, but I thought it wise to let things rest for a little, for your sake more than my own."

"I'm not angry at all. Your idea was very sensible. We'll keep right on letting them rest."

"When will you take lunch with me, Paula?"

"I'm very busy now. I couldn't—"

"You mean you want to save your time and your favors for your new lover. Why, you little fool, do you suppose you can throw me over like that?"

When the conversation ended, she had agreed to meet him for luncheon the following Saturday. She happened to know that Lloyd was going out of town for the week-end. If he found her in Fox's company, she would lose him, she was sure, and the thing to do was to see Fox just once again, and break with him finally.

The realization of the impermanence of cer-

tain human emotions was brought home to her even more forcibly, as she sat in a popular restaurant the following Saturday, staring at her untouched plate, and listening to the smooth voice which once had power to quicken her pulses. Fox had laughed at the idea that all was over between them. He had insisted on regarding her reiteration of her decision as an indication of pique, due to his long silence. And when pale and unsmiling, she told him he was not to telephone her again, he began to speak of Lloyd.

"Do you know, I like the looks of your new friend. What's his name? I'll have to look him up. I've an idea we'd have lots of things in common." His eye marked the horror of hers. "What did you say his name was?"

"I didn't say."

"It'll be easy enough to find out, Sweetness. Still too angry are you, to do me even that little favor?"

She left him when the meal was over, refusing to attend a matinee, and an invitation to meet him for dinner. But though she had said *no* so emphatically, it seemed to her that his smile glinted malicious triumph. He had not been trying to frighten her by a suggestion he had no idea of carrying out. The sight of her in Lloyd's

company had stirred the instincts of the primeval male, submerging the caution which for months had kept him away from her. He was ready to destroy what he could not enjoy.

As she made her way along the street, a chill of foreboding, more frosty than the winter air, blackened those dreams which had lent to the last few weeks the fragrance of spring. He would betray her to Lloyd, and Lloyd would be through with her, and what was the use of living any longer?

Then in her despair she clutched at a chance, fragile as the proverbial straw at which the drowning grasp. That nice Mr. Lindsay had once frightened Gerald away. He might be able to do it again. She had no idea where to find him, but she could easily find Mrs. Pendleton. Her resentment toward Pollyanna had vanished as if it had never existed. To the frightened, bewildered girl she seemed literally, the last hope.

CHAPTER XX

A STORMY DAY

When Pollyanna remarked at breakfast that she was glad it was snowing, Jimmy's quizzical gaze challenged her across the table. "Don't spoil a good thing, dear, by carrying it too far."

"Perhaps it's selfish, Jimmy, but as far as I'm concerned, I really *am* glad. On a day like this, one won't be interrupted by callers."

The wind shook the windows violently, as if to call attention to the pageant of whirling snowflakes. "I should rather think not," said Jimmy with conviction.

"There's some house-cleaning we didn't do at the proper time, because somebody was coming down with the grippe, or was just getting over it. This will be a splendid day for that sort of work, for I won't have to change my dress till it's time for you to come home."

"And probably not then," said Jimmy. "The trains are bound to be late tonight if this keeps up."

The weather was much too bad for the children to go to school. Junior and Judy joyfully accepted this unexpected holiday, and at once began to lay plans for getting out their sleds, and the wooden shovels they used at the seashore. When their mother vetoed outdoor play, Junior was particularly aggrieved.

"I've been waiting, and waiting for a nice snow storm, an' praying for one, too, every single night. And now when God sent me just the kind I asked for—"

"There'll be plenty of snow left when the storm is over."

"Yes, and then I'll have to go to school," lamented Junior.

Judy came to her mother's aid. "Why, Junior Pendleton, that's not the way to play the glad game."

"I don't care." But Junior looked rather ashamed, nevertheless, to find that his younger sister was measuring up to the standards of his mother's game, while he fell short.

"I'm glad it's snowing so hard we can't get out," continued Judy virtuously, "'Cause there's some awful hard words in our spelling lesson today, an' now I shan't have to learn 'em."

By the time Pollyanna was ready for the

house-cleaning job for which the day seemed especially designed, the children were playing contentedly indoors. She donned a faded gingham, tied a towel over her hair, and marched upstairs to the store room, which for obvious reasons, had been neglected in the semi-annual upheaval from which no household is exempt. At luncheon, as a concession to the proprieties, she removed the towel, and washed her face and hands, returning to her task, as soon as the meal was over, in spite of Nancy's protests.

"Pity you can't be satisfied with well enough, Miss Pollyanna. It's a shame for you to get so tired out that you can't tell your right hand from your left, it is, it is." Having known Pollyanna from her childhood up, Nancy sometimes forgot she was not still a child, and treated her accordingly.

At half past two the storm was still violent, and Pollyanna, while regretting the fact that many people would be inconvenienced, congratulated herself that the day was proving exactly suited to her requirements. And then Nancy, rather breathless after toiling up two flights of stairs, appeared in the doorway and announced, "Miss Pollyanna, there's a lady to see you."

The information was addressed to a pair of

legs, the rest of Pollyanna being hidden in a large trunk. But at Nancy's unexpected news, she bobbed up like a Jack-in-the-box. From under her turban towel, somewhat askew as a result of her attempt to stand on her head, she gazed at Nancy incredulously.

"Somebody to see me? On a day like this? Oh! Nancy, there can't be."

"Yes'm. She's down in the living room now —a young lady."

"Did she ask for me, or for the lady of the house?"

"For you, Miss Pollyanna. She said 'Mrs. Pendleton' as plain as the nose on your face."

Pollyanna fingered the feature referred to, as if Nancy's figure of speech contained an uncomplimentary significance. "She could have asked one of the neighbors who lived here. No one would come out today just for sociability. Did you say she was young, Nancy?"

"Yes'm. She's real young."

"I suppose she wants me to subscribe for a magazine so she can go to college," sighed Pollyanna. "If I keep on sending young people to college by subscriptions to magazines, I won't have any money left for educating my own children when they're ready for college. I think,

Nancy, you'd better go down and find what she wants of me. It's too much to stop and clean up just for the sake of telling a person that we can't read the magazines we've subscribed for already."

It was clear that Nancy did not relish the commission, and Pollyanna recognizing her hesitancy, set herself to find out what it meant. "What's the matter, Nancy? Does she look very poor?"

"Indeed she don't, ma'am," exclaimed Nancy evidently glad of the chance to correct her employer's misapprehension. "She's an awful pretty young lady, 'cept that she's sad lookin', and her clothes are 'most as pretty as she is."

"Pretty and young," repeated Pollyanna. An idea had occurred to her so fantastically improbable that she was ready to laugh at herself for entertaining it. Yet she was not willing to dismiss it without putting it to the test. "Has she big blue eyes?"

"Yes'm, she has. Blue as the sky, I call 'em."

"And a lovely little nose, and a dimple in her chin?"

Nancy's affirmatives, while not convincing Pollyanna as to the identity of her caller, made her certain that she must take no chances. She

tore the towel from her head and let it drop to the floor in token of surrender.

"All right, Nancy. Have her take off her coat and make herself comfortable. And tell her I'll be down very soon. It doesn't seem possible that it can be, but wouldn't it be wonderful if it were?"

With this cryptic conclusion, Pollyanna flew down the stairs, and Nancy following more deliberately, carried out her employer's instructions to the letter. The pretty girl thanked her, but did not act on the invitation. She sat enveloped in her snowy coat, down which trickled little rivulets to form miniature pools on the rug, and clutched her umbrella as if it were her only weapon against a hostile world.

Necessity, the most successful of teachers, had grounded Pollyanna in the art of making rapid toilets. Jimmy had complimented her—an unusual form of compliment from husband to wife—by declaring that if everything else failed her, she could always earn her living as a lightning change artist. The girl downstairs had not waited long before Pollyanna put in her appearance, a little breathless, and a trifle damp, but quite presentable.

"Why, Miss Merrill!" Her first glance assured

her that her preposterous intuition had been correct. Paula's color was not as bright as usual. Her pretty mouth drooped at the corners. Her big blue eyes had an expression quite unlike the half hostile regard Pollyanna remembered from their last encounter. But it was unmistakably Paula Merrill, and as she prattled on, trying to set the girl at her ease, Pollyanna was asking herself the reason for her being there on such a day.

"I can't tell you how brave I think you are to come out in such a storm. But please take off your coat. You won't need it because I'm going to light the grate fire. We always keep it ready, so it will be blazing in a minute. Don't you love a wood fire on a snowy day?"

Pollyanna talked rather hastily, influenced perhaps by the memory of that dreadful Sunday Paula had spent under her roof. She applied a match to a neat little pile of shavings in the grate, and drew a sigh of satisfaction as the flames leaped up the chimney. Then she turned to Paula and found the girl looking up at her with an expression that was startling. It was the desperate appeal of a creature trapped.

Before she could speak again, Paula said. "I

didn't come to make a call, Mrs. Pendleton. I—I need help. I thought maybe you—"

"Why, of course," said Pollyanna casually, though instantly alert, and more than a little apprehensive. "I'll be very glad to help you. Just tell me all about it."

A protracted silence followed this invitation. Then Paula said in a stifled voice, "It's so hard to—to explain."

Pollyanna's anxiety was growing, but she managed to smile, and patted her visitor's hand. "Don't hurry yourself, my dear. Take your time."

Paula began twisting her handkerchief into knots. "I didn't act right when I was here before. Instead of being grateful, I just hated you for interfering."

Pollyanna's first impulse was to interrupt and cut short the confession. With an effort she held herself in check, and let the girl go on. Whatever else was on her mind, this acknowledgement could not fail to do Paula good. And while she met and conquered the impulse to silence these humiliating acknowledgements, Paula continued, "I was very angry because I didn't understand. You were right all the time."

"Yes, I was right," Pollyanna agreed, and then

sympathy got the better of her. "As long as you think so, too, that is all that is necessary, and we won't have to talk about it any more." She added with a smile, "I'm sure you didn't come here this dreadful day to tell me that."

Paula sat looking at the floor. "I thought perhaps you would help me. Somebody's got to help me." Into her monotone, the sharp note of terror suddenly intruded. "I'm afraid."

"Of Mr. Fox?" asked Pollyanna, keeping her voice even by a desperate effort.

"Yes. He says if I won't see him—and do as he asks me—he'll tell Lloyd—about that night."

"Oh! And who is Lloyd, Paula?" Pollyanna used the girl's first name without realizing it, till after she had spoken, but the look that crossed her visitor's face, convinced her that it had been a happy error.

"He's a boy I used to know at home. That day, after I went away from here, Mr. Lindsay took me to dinner, and Lloyd had been having his dinner in the same place. And so Mr. Lindsay drove us both back to the city, and ever since then he's been coming to see me."

"I remember Mr. Lindsay's speaking of him. He liked his appearance so much."

"Oh, he's nice," Paula said, her voice breaking. "He's the nicest boy. And now—"

The tears came with a rush, sweeping away the last vestige of reserve. As she sobbed, Paula's confidences gushed as freely as her tears, and Pollyanna, sitting very still, not to break the spell, listened tensely to the story. It was like looking down from the edge of a crater into the seething depths, this glimpse into a turbulent human heart.

Not till Paula finished with a long sighing breath, as if in exhausting her topic, she had exhausted herself, did Pollyanna speak. She took the limp hand, grasping a damp little wad that had been a handkerchief, and stroked it soothingly. "Paula, I think Mr. Fox can be suppressed. I'm sure Mr. Lindsay will see him and put a stop to this persecution. Fortunately for us, along with his other base qualities, he's a coward."

Paula had wept away all her tears, or this assurance would have been the signal for a fresh outburst. She clutched the kind hand that touched hers, and clung to it, as if it had been a life-preserver and she overboard.

But Pollyanna had not finished, and what she had to say next was less easily spoken. "Paula,"

she questioned very gently, "Has Lloyd asked you to marry him?"

"No," the girl whispered, and a lovely color spread over her cheeks, blotched by hysterical weeping.

"But you think he means to?"

"I think he does. He—he says things, and he isn't—the kind of a boy—"

"Yes, I see. Well, dear, before you answer him, you must tell him all about your acquaintance with Mr. Fox."

Paula jerked her hand away, and started to her feet. In the look she turned on Pollyanna was a blending of reproach, incredulity, consternation.

"Tell him! Tell Lloyd! Why, he'd never have anything more to do with me! He'd despise me." She ran to Pollyanna and seized her by the shoulders. "He doesn't even like girls who let men take little liberties with them. And if he knew— Oh, he'd hate me."

"Paula, poor child. Sit down quietly and listen to me. Don't you see that if you married him with this secret, it would be like living with a sword hanging over you. You would never know when he might learn of it. If he seemed abstracted and silent, the first thing that would

come to you would be the fear that somebody had told him. Nothing could make up to you, Paula, for living day after day, and year after year in dread of being found out."

"But don't you understand? If I tell him, I'll lose him."

"Better lose him now than later. If he will ever forgive you, it will be when you tell him with your own lips, for no reason except your wish to be fair with him. If he finds out later, he will have to forgive not only the thing itself, but your hiding it from him. And if the first would be hard to overlook, the second would be harder."

"But it isn't as if— Oh, Mrs. Pendleton, if I'd been a bad girl, I'd have had to tell him, of course. But I don't have to now. Say I don't have to."

Pollyanna sighed. If there was something humorous in Paula's assumption of moral superiority, considering that her rescue had been so completely a matter of chance, Pollyanna was anything but amused.

"No, Paula, I can't say that. The more strongly he feels on the subject, the more necessary it is for you to be frank with him. As I said before, it's better to lose him now than

later—better for you, I mean. And if he is as fine as you say, you mustn't think of tricking and deceiving him. You'll have to be fine, too."

It was fortunate that Paula had come early, for the struggle was protracted. They went over the same ground again and again, Paula declaring hysterically that to follow Pollyanna's advice meant the loss of her lover, Pollyanna insisting that at any cost, she must be frank with him. Fortunately her convictions did not admit of any middle way. She could not imagine a successful marriage based on concealment. It would have been easy to decline to enact the role of Paula's conscience, and tell her to do what she herself thought right, but it seemed to Pollyanna that the girl needed her help in making a right decision, as much as in the matter of Gerald Fox.

Jimmy reached home late, presenting even after the short walk from the station, the appearance of an animated snow man. As he entered the living room, two figures sat by the grate fire, Pollyanna with a most unusual air of leisure and another young woman he did not immediately recognize.

"Jimmy, dear," said Pollyanna coming forward, "you remember Miss Merrill. I've per-

suaded her to spend the night with us, the storm's so bad."

With a wife like Pollyanna, Jimmy was used to surprises, but most of them left him capable of saying something. This shock rendered him dumb. He bowed low to the slight girl, noting her reddened eyelids, and backed out of the room without a word. But on his way up to change his collar, he muttered an exclamation that had been submerged in his consciousness since his boyhood in Vermont, "Paula Merrill, here! Jumping Jehoshaphat!"

CHAPTER XXI

JIMMY BACKSLIDES

Frank Lindsay justified Pollyanna's expectations in the matter of Paula's persecutor. She laid the case before him on the evening following Paula's visit, and the next evening Lindsay had a brief interview with Fox. The quarter of an hour, as Lindsay used it, was long enough to accomplish the desired end. He gave no details as to what had taken place, except to say that he had thoroughly enjoyed himself.

"As a rule I don't like stepping on crawling things, but this was an exceptional case. Thank you, Pollyanna, for a pleasant evening."

The call, during which he reported the result of his mission, was a goodbye visit. Lindsay was going away for a time, "going south," he said, vaguely, and added something about personal business. He was vague, too, when they asked the time of his return.

"You know you'd promised to spend Christmas with us," Pollyanna reproached him. "I

was getting ready to hang up your stocking in the row."

"I'm sorry not to keep that promise," Lindsay said so gravely that she wondered if he could possibly imagine his change of plans had hurt her feelings. When she asked for his address, he suggested that it would be well to send all mail in care of the hotel. "They'll always know where to reach me," he explained. And she was so surprised by the implication that the Pendleton family would not know where to reach him, that for once she found herself with nothing to say.

Jimmy was a little skeptical about the "personal business" as she found when she talked things over with him later. "I suppose he wants a holiday, and thinks it sounds better to call it business."

"Somehow that doesn't seem like Frank."

"Any fellow who has money enough so that he can live well without working is bound to find excuses for taking things easy," Jimmy declared. "Don't blame him. I'd do it myself."

Perhaps because Jimmy had gone back to work too soon after his attack of grippe, or possibly because the winter had opened with unwonted severity, he found the daily routine more irksome

than usual. Like most young Americans, Jimmy frequently grumbled over the exactions of his job, and yet would have felt lost without it. This winter, for the first time, he found himself envying men of leisure. Take Frank Lindsay, for instance, off somewhere so busy enjoying himself that he couldn't even find time to send a post-card. Jimmy hoped he knew how lucky he was.

Like the majority of his countrymen, Jimmy estimated success largely by the return in dollars. Just before their marriage he had confided to Pollyanna his intention of becoming a millionaire. But that goal was almost as distant as when he announced his purpose. Jimmy had done well. His employers thought highly of him, and proved their confidence by entrusting him with increasingly responsible work, but his salary increases had not kept pace with these other marks of esteem. A young man with a wife and three children must be doing very well indeed before he saves much money.

For some reason, the thought of Frank Lindsay, away on a protracted holiday, got on Jimmy's nerves. Unconsciously, for months past, he had been resenting Lindsay's affluence. There was his car, just such an expensive piece

of perfection as Jimmy wanted to own, and hang it, he couldn't see his way to buy a Ford. Of course Pollyanna pretended that she enjoyed motoring all the better because it was something of a rarity, but if they had a car in the garage, like nearly everybody else on Elsinore Terrace, he knew the noon-day sun would pale beside her radiance. Pollyanna needed a trip, a rest somewhere in those lands of perpetual summer, which have become the winter playground of the prosperous, and it was all he could do to pay for coal to keep her from freezing at home.

The remembrances that came from Lindsay at Christmas had all been ordered in the city before his departure The children wrote him characteristic notes of thanks. "Daddy said the doll you sent me was a bathing bewty," Judy printed out laboriously, "but when I started to bath her it came off, so I stopped." Junior had received a complete baseball outfit, and his letter made clear that his new acquisition had been put to use without waiting for the return of spring. "I broke the glass in the bookcase when I was practising batting, and I threw my ball through Mrs. McGill's dining room window; I guess I will have lots of fun with your nice present and I thank you."

Pollyanna folded these epistles up with one of her own, a message from Jimmy scrawled on the space she had left blank, and dispatched them to Lindsay, in care of his hotel. She expected to hear from him at once, but days merged into weeks and no word came. As it proved, Pollyanna had little time to ponder over this remissness. Her thoughts were absorbed by the discovery that all was not well with Jimmy.

It was characteristic of Pollyanna to assume that the trouble was physical. When her husband came down to breakfast, unsmiling and with little to say, and when he sat in the evening looking steadily at the book before him without turning a page, she was convinced he must be ill. Her troubled inquiries only irritated him, and she learned to keep her anxiety to herself. Outwardly she was as cheerful as ever, but the strain of her uncertainty showed in her heavy eyes and her loss of color.

"Isn't there some way you can take things easier?" Jimmy demanded impatiently one evening. "Of course what you need is a complete rest, but since that doesn't seem possible—"

"Rest!" Pollyanna became animated. "Why should I want a rest?"

"Don't know, I'm sure. Possibly the fact that

you're all the time doing the work of two women may have something to do with it. That's the abominable part of being poor, that you wear yourself out over-working, and if ever you do make your pile, it's probably too late to get any fun out of it."

Pollyanna could hardly believe her ears. "Poor! Did you say we were poor?"

Her breathless amazement twisted Jimmy's lips into a sour grin. "Well—you don't think we're rich, do you?"

"Of course I do. Not the bothersome kind of riches, where you have to hire a private detective to keep your children from being kidnapped, but the nice kind where you have everything you want."

"Good Lord, Pollyanna! Don't try to work your glad game on me. Everything you want, indeed!" Then as Pollyanna gazed at him defiantly, he continued, "You wouldn't like more clothes, I suppose."

"Jimmy, I get lots more fun out of a new dress than Aunt Ruth does. When you order them by the half dozen, as you order grapefruit for breakfast, they don't make so much impression."

"And of course you wouldn't care for extra servants, so you needn't keep grubbing all day."

"Sadie has two, and she's so afraid of asking one of them to do work that belongs to the other, that she's in hot water half the time."

"You wouldn't like it if we could go off on a long pleasure jaunt, the way Lindsay is doing?"

"Why, of course, I'd like to go on a trip with you," smiled Pollyanna, "but staying at home with you and the children is so nice that I can't seem to envy anybody."

"You little goose," exclaimed Jimmy in a loud and angry voice. But as he came around the table immediately and kissed her, she had an absurd feeling that she had the best of the argument.

It was two or three days later that Jimmy came home from the city mysteriously changed. Pollyanna knew before he had spoken a word that here was the old-time Jimmy, not the morose stranger of the last two months. And this discovery made her partly oblivious to the importance of his first announcement.

"Pollyanna, here's a letter from Frank."

"Well, it's time we were hearing." She spoke at random, her mind engrossed with the bewildering change in him.

"He hasn't been having the picnic we thought. Here, read it for yourself."

Pollyanna took the letter from her husband's hand and uttered an exclamation. "Why, is he in Baltimore?"

"In the hospital. But go ahead and see what he has to say."

Pollyanna dropped into a chair, her face very anxious. Lindsay's letter was type-written, including the signature. As she read, she understood why.

"Dear Pollyanna and Jim:

"This is what the magazines call a confession. I didn't tell you people about it earlier, because I didn't want to worry you, but I've got to the point of being ready to sacrifice my friends for the sake of relieving my mind.

"I came down to Baltimore because I was having serious trouble with my eyes, and was advised to see a specialist here. For some time I underwent very painful treatments, but they didn't have the effect the doctor hoped for, and so we decided on an operation. The probability is that when the bandages come off, I'll be as good as new, though there's just a chance that I'll never see again. The surgeon who told me this before he operated, emphasized his conviction that my chances to come through in good shape were ninety-nine out of a hundred, and I'm not fool enough to make myself miserable over the one chance against me.

"The thing that is troubling me a good deal more at present is the infernal dullness of sitting in a hospital with a bandage over my eyes. The doctor wants me to wear it for another month, and if I stay here, I'll be ready for a strait-jacket. I wonder if I can get into some hospital near you, where I can be looked after properly, and see you people now and then (I don't mean that 'see' literally, of course). I don't mind saying that I miss you abominably. After so many weeks of it, you might think I could stand another month, but apparently there's a limit to endurance, and I've reached mine.

"If you find a place where I can get suitable care, near enough so I can drive over and visit you two or three times a week, I think I'd feel less like wishing that I'd died in infancy. Don't put yourself to too much trouble, of course, but if you get track of what I want, telegraph me.

"I'm dictating this and, of course, I shan't see it after it's typed, so if it sounds too babyish, forgive me.

"As ever,

"FRANK."

Pollyanna's eyes were moist as she finished the letter, but before she had time to comment on it, Jimmy spoke her name. Something in his tone made her look up quickly.

"Frank calls that a confession. I've got one to make, too. Pollyanna, I've been making myself miserable envying that poor chap. All these weeks I've been grouching around—"

"Now, Jimmy, you haven't—"

"Oh, I know. You see I thought he was off enjoying himself, while I had to work, and all the time the poor chap was having those painful treatments, with the prospect of going blind to think about in his leisure moments. I actually was jealous of him, because he had more money than we did. I didn't take it into account that he's alone in the world, and that he had the bad luck to fall in love with a neurasthenic. Pollyanna, take it from me, tonight I'm glad I'm Jim Pendleton."

It sounded egotistic, but Pollyanna beamed as if she had just received a tremendous compliment.

His confession off his mind, Jimmy took up his friend's letter, and re-read the concluding paragraph.

"Poor old boy. Indigo would be pale in comparison. I wonder if there *is* any place near where he could stay, Pollyanna?"

"I want him to stay here."

"Here?" Jimmy stared at her. "You're not serious?"

"Yes, I am."

"Why, with all you have to do, Pollyanna,

it's out of the question. He'd need to be cared for like a child."

"I know. If he wants to pay his board, we'll let him, and I'll use the money for hiring people to do the things I usually attend to myself. What I am thinking of, Jimmy," said Pollyanna, with the rapt voice of a conspirator, "is the effect on Lorraine."

"Hang Lorraine."

Pollyanna disregarded his lack of enthusiasm. "She always watches the house like a lynx when he's in it. I'll take him out to walk leaning on my arm and shuffling along with a bandage over his eyes, and when she sees it from her window, she'll simply be swept off her feet."

"But she'll know it's only a temporary thing."

"I'm not sure that she will." Pollyanna's tone was significant. "In fact, if I have my way, she won't."

"What the dickens do you mean?"

"There's a chance, isn't there, one in a hundred, that the operation won't be successful, that Frank will have further trouble, and eventually become blind. And in talking with Lorraine, I'm going to emphasize that one chance."

"Why, you little unprincipled—"

"No, Jimmy," Pollyanna interrupted, "I'm

not unprincipled at all. The happiness of two people is at stake, and if I can help them, I shall. Lorraine doesn't need to be reassured, and if it depends on me, she won't be. I'll tell her the doctor hopes Frank will come out of this all right but he isn't sure."

Jimmy chuckled. But his first impulse to protest was waning. He was inclined to think that a little anxiety would do Lorraine no harm.

"Even taking that into account," he said, "I'm afraid that having Frank here will be altogether too hard for you. And if he feels that way himself, we can't drag him here, no matter how lonely he feels."

They sat down together to plan their campaign, and as a result of their deliberations, a few hours later a telegram winged its way to the Baltimore hospital.

"Am coming down on the night train and will bring you back with me. Have found just the place for you.

"James Pendleton."

CHAPTER XXII

POLLYANNA EXACTS A PROMISE

JIMMY and Frank obligingly postponed their arrival till after the children were dispatched to school and the house in order for the day. Pollyanna had hurried through her work, that she might be free to devote herself to her patient, and as soon as her hands were no longer busy, the time of waiting seemed intolerably long. It was necessary to listen to the unruffled ticking of the mantel clock to assure herself that it was not taking a holiday.

When at last the taxi-cab rounded the corner, Pollyanna flew to the door, her face radiating a joyous welcome. She had not reckoned on the effect of seeing Lindsay helpless, groping. As Jimmy assisted him from the cab and led him up the walk, shuffling, and shrinking, his hat pulled low over his bandaged eyes, a surging pity swept the gladness from Pollyanna's face, and left it horror-stricken. Before she realized what was happening, the tears were running down her cheeks.

Jimmy guided his friend in the direction of the porch steps, looking at his weeping wife with an astonishment that was two-thirds disapproval. "Hello! Here's Pollyanna come to meet us," he exclaimed, his voice unnecessarily loud. As he reached her, he put his free arm about her and kissed her, and then gave her a little shake, its implication obvious.

Pollyanna's self-control was unequal to evoking a smile, but that was not a serious matter, since to blind eyes, smiles and tears are all alike. She finally succeeded in saying, "Hello, Frank!" without too great a betrayal of emotion, and having squeezed his hand nervously, she fled to her room to recover the poise so unexpectedly overthrown.

It was fifteen minutes before she reappeared, her eyes and nose an unbecoming pink, and her voice a trifle husky, but with no other trace of the emotional storm which had sent two of Jimmy's handkerchiefs to the clothes-hamper. Like most wives, Pollyanna fell back on her husband's handkerchiefs when serious business was on hand. She found Frank occupying an easy-chair in the living room, Jiggs pressed against his knees, and little Ruth standing before him, and gazing perplexedly at his bandaged eyes.

The small girl had evidently been wrestling with a knotty problem, and just as her mother entered the room, she found a satisfactory solution. "Peek-boo," she cried, and ran to hide behind a chair across the room, from which place of concealment she peered out at him coquettishly.

"She thinks it's a game, bless her heart," cried Pollyanna, and to her immense relief found herself able to laugh. And Frank joined her with a spontaneous amusement which helped wonderfully.

"I'm inclined to agree with her, now that I'm here," said Lindsay. "But take it from me, being shut up in a hospital when you're not at all sick, is anything but an agreeable indoor sport." He checked himself suddenly, as if he had just remembered something. "Where are you, Pollyanna?"

"Right here, Frank."

"I wanted to be sure you were hearing me. Jimmy says that you've pledged yourself to hire a whole corps of servants, so things won't be too hard for you while I'm on your hands. If you don't keep your word, I give you fair warning, that I'll fill one of the bathtubs and drown myself."

After Jimmy had taken a reluctant departure,

impelled by the realization of his responsibilities as bread-winner for a family, Frank and Pollyanna settled down for a long talk. "What do you hear from our little friend, Miss Merrill?" the young man asked.

"Well, after your talk with Fox, I wrote her a note, a very guarded one, of course. I said you had attended to the matter she had complained of, and that I thought she would have no more trouble. Anyone who read the letter might think she was a tenant who'd made a fuss about the drains."

"Very sensible."

"Evidently she thought so, too, for her letter was as guarded as mine. Or almost. Perhaps she was a little more grateful than a tenant would be for having the drains put in order. I wrote her once again while you were away, inviting her here for the week-end, but she happened to have an engagement, so I haven't seen her since she came here that snowy day."

"When she needs you, you'll probably see her very promptly," said Lindsay rather cynically. "That's one of human nature's endearing little ways."

"I can understand how she might rather dread seeing me again," said Pollyanna reflectively.

"I told her she mustn't get engaged to that young Woodward without letting him know about Fox."

"Hm! It's a question whether he'll make a clean breast of everything on his side."

"Oh, Frank, you don't think there's a doubt about it's being the right thing, do you? If she's candid with him, she has nothing to fear from Fox or anyone else. But if she keeps him in the dark, how is she ever going to have a moment's peace?"

"Probably you're right, Pollyanna. In fact I'm pretty sure you are, Fox being what he is."

"As a matter of expediency, I'm right, and as a matter of principle, I'm doubly right. You can't build a successful marriage on a quicksand. Oh, excuse me a minute, there's the telephone."

Pollyanna was not surprised to find Lorraine on the wire, but the strained intensity of the voice that spoke her name was startling, for all that she had counted on this very thing in laying her plans.

"Pollyanna!" Her name flung back at her with a curious, palpitating emotion in every syllable, was the answer to her interrogative "Hello". The voice continued breathlessly, "This is Lorraine."

"Oh, yes. Good morning."

Apparently Lorraine was in no mood for the exchange of trivial courtesies. "Who came this morning?" she demanded.

"Why Jimmy came with Franklin Lindsay. He's been at the Hopkins hospital for an operation on his eyes."

Lorraine gave a little muffled cry. It was clear that for the moment she had forgotten how carefully she had concealed from Pollyanna the fact of her acquaintance with Lindsay.

"Oh, but, Pollyanna, it didn't look like him. He—he walked like an old man."

"Yes, I know."

"But of course, he'll be all right after a little?"

"We don't know."

"What?" The exclamation was a wail. "What do you mean, Pollyanna?"

Resolutely Pollyanna hardened her heart, and said, "We shan't know for another month."

"But you can't mean that there's any chance that he'll be—be blind?"

"I'm afraid there *is* a chance." At this point the conversation ended abruptly. With Lorraine's forlorn cry ringing in her ears, Pollyanna went back to the living-room to find her patient on his feet. The eyes more than any other fea-

ture, interpret the moods, and any face with the eyes hidden, becomes a mask. Yet instinctively Pollyanna felt that she was going to have trouble.

"Who was that on the phone?" Lindsay's manner was abrupt, almost angry, and Pollyanna was certain that he knew the answer before she replied, "Why, that was Lorraine."

"I thought as much. But you talked to her as if— Look here, Pollyanna, do you and Jim know more about my condition than I do myself?"

Pollyanna's answering laugh was reassuring. "Sit down, Frank, and make yourself comfortable while I explain. It's evident that Jimmy didn't enlighten you as to my little scheme."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm not going to tell Lorraine that the chances are ninety-nine out of a hundred that you'll be as well as ever in a month. I'm going to let her do a little worrying."

His shocked exclamation was anything but flattering. "Pollyanna, what are you thinking of? I won't stand for anything of the sort. The idea of torturing the poor girl by needless apprehension."

"Franklin Lindsay," Pollyanna cried, in very real exasperation, "you deserve to have me wash

my hands of you, as far as your love affairs are concerned. You remind me of those mothers who won't do anything that will cause their children pain, no matter what end is to be gained. I'm trying to save Lorraine's life happiness, and you won't coöperate with me because it will mean an anxious month for her."

A little startled by her vehemence, Lindsay tried another tack. "Listen, Pollyanna, if you think I want to marry any woman because she's sorry for me, you're badly mistaken. God knows I love Lorraine. If ever she marries me because she wants me, I'll be the happiest man on earth. But I wouldn't take her if she went on her knees to me, if she offered herself out of pity."

Pollyanna's sole answer to this outburst was a muffled groan, and then as Lindsay began to reiterate his position, she suddenly found her tongue.

"No wonder such hosts of people are wretched. They're so determined to dictate the terms on which they'll be happy. I've told Lorraine the truth and nothing but the truth. Telling folks the whole truth is something that has to be done with great discretion. I haven't heard you complaining because I didn't inform her that I was perfectly conversant with the state of affairs be-

tween you two, but let her talk about you as if you were strangers. I've always spoken of you as if her only possible interest in you was that you were a friend of ours, and if you disapproved of my way of doing, you didn't let me know."

"Why, it's not the same thing at all."

"Of course it's not the same thing. But the reason for concealing the facts in one case, applies equally well to the other. The truth is that we can't treat Lorraine as if she were a reasonable woman. She's got into a morbid mood, where all she thinks about is herself, and from her point of view, that scar on her cheek is as big a disaster as the sinking of the Lusitania. This trouble of yours may give her just the jolt she needs, if nobody tells her you'll be as good as new in a few days. I won't do it, and I advise you not to."

"I? What chance will I have?"

"That remains to be seen." Pollyanna's voice betrayed inordinate complacency. " I suspect the opportunity will come before your thirty days are up."

"Do you really think she'll let me see her, Pollyanna?" Lindsay was trembling as he put the question, and Pollyanna's indignation at her self-centred neighbor flared up as it had done on

innumerable occasions. And as she had done often before, she concealed her mood from the man who would have been sure to resent it, and answered quietly, "I think it can be managed, if you don't scold me into explaining that your chance of recovery is ninety-nine to one, instead of fifty-fifty."

The young man became contrite. "You've been my good angel in this, Pollyanna, and if I scolded you, hanging is too good for me. I dare say you're right about it. You generally are right, I've noticed."

Pollyanna took full advantage of his mood. "Then you won't tell her that there's nothing to worry about?"

"No, I won't tell her." He laughed as he added, "not even if I get the chance."

"You won't act like a silly mother, who won't have her child's tooth pulled, when it should be, because she hates to have him hurt."

"I'll try not to enact the role of fond mother."

"It's a promise, remember. If you do your part as well as I'm going to do mine, I believe it won't be long before you'll be tremendously glad that your eyes went back on you for a little."

Lindsay laughed huskily. "You're going to

start me to playing the game, are you? Well, I've suffered a good deal in the last few months, and it's cost me considerable in money and inconvenience, and I've been infernally blue at times. But if all this should be the means of my having an old-fashioned talk with Lorraine, I'll feel that it was dirt cheap."

They were still talking when Junior and Judy came from school, and the sight of the strange man, with the bandaged eyes, rendered this voluble pair temporarily dumb. Lindsay's familiar voice was reassuring, and presently Judy was perched on his knee, while Junior stood close by, his sympathy making him look extremely self-conscious and uncomfortable.

"Did a bad cat scratch out your eyes?" fluted Judy, her little hand nestling into his.

"No. All the cats I know are nice."

"We had a very bad cat," said Judy, trying to be entertaining. "She had too many toes, an' she put all her babies to sleep on a lady's coat, an' she screamed—the lady did—till me an' Junior got all woked up."

"Mother gave her away," said Junior, coöperating in his sister's charitable purpose. "The lady who sells country sausage wanted her."

Lindsay correctly interpreted the concluding

pronoun as referring to the six-toed cat. "Will she make her into sausage?" he inquired. His intention was humorous, but he knew at once, from Judy's horrified gasp, that he had blundered.

"If—if that old sausage lady eats up Smudge an' her kittens—the next time she comes I'll—I'll throw stones at her, I will, like David did, and make her dead."

Pollyanna coming in to tell the children that their luncheon was ready, set Judy's apprehensions at rest. "There's a superstition, luckily for me, that six-toed cats are especially good mousers. My sausage woman took Smudge off my hands, and all the kittens but two. Now come, children, you need to hurry."

The two had started for school again before Pollyanna took Lindsay into the dining room. He understood the reason and thanked her.

"It's sloppy business for a blind man, Pollyanna, this eating. Sometimes I'm tempted to try the effects of a long fast."

"You won't fast in this house," Pollyanna informed him firmly. "But if you feel like eating your meals by yourself for a while, that can easily be arranged. Here's your fork, and the meat is all cut up."

She waited till the ordeal of eating was over before proposing that they take a walk. She did not expect the suggestion to be favorably received, and as a matter of fact, Lindsay's protest came little short of a flat refusal.

"I hate to make such a spectacle of myself," he complained. "I know exactly how I must look, shuffling and scuffling as if I were ninety. And it's not only my pride that suffers, either. I feel as if I were walking directly into a forest. I'm wincing every minute, expecting to crash into a tree-trunk."

"You know I won't let you walk into anything. It's only a nervous feeling that you'll get over soon, if you don't give in to it. You really ought to take a little exercise every day. I'm sure that your general health will effect your eyes. It's necessary to keep fit, and you can't do that if you shut yourself up in the house."

She had her way, of course, and finally they ventured out, Pollyanna holding fast to Lindsay's arm, while little Ruth accompanied them, like an eccentric satellite. All Pollyanna's instinctive motherliness yearned over the strong young fellow, as she guided him along the snowy path, alert for inequalities in the side walk, for slippery spots, for the downward step at the

curb. Lindsay moved stumblingly, and with evident shrinking, and little Ruth, disgusted with their slow progress, ran ahead, and then turning urged them to "Hu'wy up," emphasizing her injunction by gesticulating violently with her small, mittened fist.

Pollyanna had meant every word she said when she had urged on Lindsay the importance of taking a daily constitutional, but she had another reason for her insistence she had not imparted to him. Five minutes after their return to the house, she saw a slender figure crossing the street, and knew her artifice had been successful.

She hurried into the living room where Lindsay was again ensconsed in the big chair. "Frank," she said, "it has turned out as I thought it would. Lorraine is coming here."

He started to his feet and stood there, one hand gripping the other in an effort at self-control.

"If she comes in," Pollyanna continued, "she'll probably be quite broken up. So please remember your promise."

"My promise?"

"That you won't try to reassure her."

"Oh, that. Well, I'll remember."

The door bell rang. Lindsay jumped as if the

sound had been a crashing thunder peal, and Pollyanna went to answer the summons. Lorraine was at the door, so pale that the scar on her cheek showed blue against the white.

"Pollyanna," she began without preface, "I've been deceiving you. I pretended that I never heard of Franklin Lindsay till you mentioned him. We were friends, once—dear friends—lovers. I want to see him."

She flung up her head and looked Pollyanna in the face. Then she caught her breath. Pollyanna's eyes were blue suns. Their radiance dazzled her.

"He's in the living room, dear," said Pollyanna. "Go right in." She waited till Lorraine had crossed the threshold, and then closed the door upon the two.

CHAPTER XXIII

CONFESSION BY PROXY

WHEN Lindsay had been in the house two weeks, Pollyanna informed Jimmy that the addition to the family, instead of increasing her cares, had resulted in giving her a prolonged holiday.

"You insisted on my getting that extra maid," she told him reproachfully, "and now this is what happens. After breakfast I help her put the living room in order, because if we don't hurry, Lorraine will be here before it is ready. Well, she comes by ten o'clock every morning, and while Kathleen is busy upstairs, I read the paper or dip into a new library book. Lorraine looks out for Frank, and with Nancy in the kitchen and Kathleen upstairs, there's nothing for me to do. I'm afraid I'm forming terrible habits. You may be sorry that you were so determined to have that extra maid."

Apparently Jimmy did not take this danger seriously. He only said, "How long does she stay—Lorraine, I mean?"

"Well, till noon, anyway. As a rule she slips out before the children come from school. Quite often she comes back in the afternoon for an hour or two."

"How do they spend the time, I wonder."

Pollyanna regarded him mischievously. "Well, Jimmy, I can only make a guess. I can't speak from observation. I remember only too well how Aunt Polly was likely to be sitting by, when you came over in the evening."

Jimmy's smile was abstracted. "What I'm getting at is this. Has she made up her mind to marry him, or is she only trying to tide him over a hard place? If that's all, I'm afraid she's doing him more harm than good."

A momentary silence fell between them. "I think you're right," Pollyanna said at length. "Seeing him every day, if she's going to break off with him again, is mistaken kindness, to say the least. And I'm afraid things aren't going just right. You know how happy he was the first week."

"Yes. That's just what I've noticed. The first week he was in the seventh heaven, but for the last few days, there's been something on his mind. Even when he talks and laughs, you feel that he's making an effort."

"Well, we've got another two weeks," Pollyanna reminded him, with determined cheerfulness. "And a great deal can happen in that time." She added irrelevantly, "Do you know, Jimmy, I've made up my mind that when the girls are old enough for lovers, we'll have to move into a bigger house. This one was never made for anything that calls for privacy. When Lorraine and Frank are in the living room, I haven't any place to take a caller but the den, and you know how cramped that seems, now that the radio set's in there. If Judy and Ruth each had a beau, you and I would have to take to the kitchen."

"I'm told that the courting nowadays is done in automobiles. By the time Judy and Ruth are old enough for that sort of thing, you and I may have the house to ourselves."

"That's not the way my girls are going to be courted," declared Pollyanna with characteristic self-confidence. "Of course," she added, "when families are crowded into a four-room flat, young lovers are driven outside. No one could possibly make love in a four-room flat. You couldn't yourself, Jimmy. No, in ten or twelve years we'll be rich enough to buy a big house, and

there'll be room for courting and everything else."

A day or two later something happened which led Pollyanna to realize that the need for a larger house was more pressing than she had supposed. It was one of the afternoons when Lorraine had supplemented her morning call by another shortly after luncheon. In the living-room the murmur of voices continued without cessation, and even Nancy was moved to wonderment.

"Good gracious, Miss Pollyanna, whatever do them two find to talk about. There aren't enough things happenin' on the face of the earth to keep their tongues a-waggin', mornin', noon and night, the way they've been doin'. Me and Timothy, all the time we was married, never found as much to say to each other as them two folks have said in the last fortnight."

With Lorraine and Frank occupying the living room, and the children due to arrive from school any minute, Pollyanna was not especially pleased when Kathleen, the maid engaged to help out during Lindsay's stay, came upstairs to inform her that a young man was waiting to see her.

"A young man," Pollyanna repeated without enthusiasm. "Did you show him into the den, Kathleen?"

"No, Mrs. Pendleton, I left him in the hall. What with loops and batteries and the rest of the stuff Mr. Pendleton has standing around that den, there's no room for callers."

Pollyanna smiled, recognizing in Kathleen's criticism, the attitude she had frequently noticed in women of a higher social class, the assumption being that the home is intended for show purposes, and not for the convenience and pleasure of its occupants. Amused rather than crestfallen by Kathleen's disapproval of the den, Pollyanna ran blithely downstairs. A tall and serious young man was occupying a chair decidedly too small for him, his reflective gaze fixed on the toes of his shoes. He rose as she approached him, looking toward her eagerly, and then an indefinable change in his expression told her that he was disappointed.

"I wanted to see Mrs. Pendleton, if she isn't too busy."

"Yes, I'm Mrs. Pendleton."

His surprise verged on incredulity. "You? Why I thought you—"

"Yes?" She waited for him to explain, and then helped him out by suggesting, "Perhaps I don't look as you thought I would."

"I supposed you'd be a lot older," he ex-

plained with boyish bluntness. "I thought you'd have grey hair, anyway."

He was a very solemn young fellow, as Pollyanna had noticed, but her involuntary burst of laughter brought a faint smile to his lips. "I'm afraid I can't oblige you in the matter of grey hair," she said, her eyes dancing, "But if there's anything else I can do—"

He glanced toward the closed door of the living room behind which voices murmured interminably, and said earnestly, "Mrs. Pendleton, I'd like to talk with you without anyone else around, please. I'm Lloyd Woodward."

Pollyanna's impulse to laughter was replaced by a feeling of exaggerated gravity. She took him into the den, apologizing for its cluttered appearance, though she realized at once that because of the absorption of the young fellow's thoughts, she might have conducted him to the cellar without surprising him in the least.

"I think you'll find the arm chair comfortable, Mr. Woodward. You're Paula Merrill's friend, aren't you?"

"Yes. It was Paula who sent me to you."

"Indeed?" Pollyanna tried to speak nonchalantly, but her sense of uneasiness was growing.

"She says that there's something I ought to know about her, and that you'll tell me."

"*I* tell you!" Pollyanna cried in shocked protest. "Why, I shouldn't think of such a thing. Whatever she wants you to know, she must tell you herself."

"You understand what she means, do you?"

Pollyanna hesitated, but the appeal of his troubled eyes was irresistible. "Yes," she acknowledged uncomfortably, "I suppose I know what she means."

"My God, Mrs. Pendleton, do you mean it's as bad as all that?" The boy dropped back in his chair, putting his hand before his eyes, and Pollyanna felt a dismayed certainty that she was not improving matters. "Just what do you mean by that?" she asked, more to gain time than because she was in doubt as to his meaning.

"I should think that was clear enough. I—I love Paula. I want to marry her, but when I asked her, she wouldn't say yes and she didn't say no. All I could get out of her was that before we went any further, there was something I had to know, something that concerned her. I begged her to tell me herself, but she wouldn't listen to such a thing. She sent me out here to see you."

Then little Paula had acted on her counsel. Pollyanna straightened herself, determined that the girl should not suffer for her honesty. "But you haven't explained yet why you asked me if it was as bad as that?" she said.

"Why, don't you see—if it's so bad that she can't tell me, and so bad that you won't, it's bound to be pretty terrible." He stared at her, as if imploring her to contradict him.

"I didn't want to enter into it, because I felt it was something for you two to settle between yourselves. Any third person who comes into it, seems out of place. But of course, if it's a question of helping Paula—"

He broke in without waiting for her to finish. "Mrs. Pendleton, what's the use of beating about the bush? What I want to know is—" But apparently when it came to putting the question boldly, his courage failed him. Instead he said rather piteously, "That's what I liked about her, she seemed so innocent and sweet. Lots of girls nowadays can hardly wait to tell you that they know as much about some things as you do, maybe a little more."

The children came bursting in from school, shouting, "Mother!" in unison. Pollyanna

opened the door and spoke in a voice which forestalled argument.

"Children, if there's anything you need, see Nancy. Then go up to the playroom and stay there with Ruth and Kathleen till I come. Mother's busy now."

The two went on, looking aggrieved, but wisely holding their peace. As Pollyanna again closed the door, she came to a sudden resolution. Paula had followed her advice to the letter, and trusted her to win her battle for her. Apparently there was no escaping the unwelcome task assigned her, and further protest would weaken the cause she had at heart.

She drew the chair she had occupied a little closer to his, and seated herself, eyeing him intently as she did so. The effect of their interview up to that moment, had been unfortunate. He had impressed her as she saw him first, as a very serious young man. Now his face was tragic. Pollyanna began speaking with a seeming calmness, contradicted by the quick drumming of her pulses.

"Perhaps since Paula sent you to me, it would be better to do as she wishes, and I'm going to start the story at the beginning. She was very young, of course, when she came to the city.

She still is very young, but she has been here, nearly two years, hasn't she? She was inexperienced and so many things were strange to her that she began to wonder if everything wasn't different from what she had supposed. She even felt a little uncertain about the things she had always taken for granted were right, and those she'd always thought wrong."

She paused, studying his frowningly attentive face, and Woodward offered the comment, "She was brought up all right. Her folks are plain people, but they're good. Everybody in Greenville knows that."

"Well, as I say, she got under influences that made her feel uncertain about the things she'd always accepted. I think a book had as much as anything to do with the change in her. And then a man came along just at the wrong time—and he was the wrong man, too."

"Do you mean he was married?"

"He was married, and he was unprincipled. He was considerably older than she, and I suppose his admiration flattered her vanity. She thought she was in love with him, and for a time she was in great danger. Indeed she came very near taking an irrevocable step. But she

didn't. Friends came to her rescue, and now she is as thankful as possible for her escape."

She could not flatter herself that her way of stating the case had produced the effect she was striving for. Woodward's expression was ominous, his brows knit in a scowl. "How long ago was all that?" he demanded, as she sat waiting for him to show his hand.

"Why, quite a long time. A number of months."

"A number of *months*? I should hope so. I've been calling on her several months myself. Don't tell me she's been going around with that fellow while I—"

She interrupted crisply, "She has not. I happen to know she has only seen him once during that time, and that was to tell him that she did not wish to see him again."

A brief silence followed. She saw a muscle twitching in his cheek and was prepared for the tremor in his voice when he began to speak. "It's tough, Mrs. Pendleton. She seemed so wonderful—so—so pure, I didn't feel as if I deserved her love. And then to know that a few months ago she was in love with that other man—and ready— Don't you see; everything's spoiled."

The cry straight from the boy's heart, moistened her eyes. Idealism facing life, and broken-hearted at what it found. But she only said, "No, I don't see that. If a girl learns from her mistakes and a pure love takes the place of one that's not fine, I can't see that anything's spoiled. Quite the other way around, I should say."

She had given him something to think of, but she had not convinced him, as she knew by the grim line of his compressed lips. She tried again. "Of course you realize that Paula didn't need to tell you this. She could have married you, in all probability, without your knowing what had happened. You might never have known it, and then again, you might have found it out at some time in the future, when it would hurt you more than it does now. I want you to realize that Paula was ready to take the chance of losing you, rather than deceive you."

At last she had scored. She could see the softening of his tight-set lips. "Yes," he admitted, "that was white of her."

"I wonder," said Pollyanna casually, "if you've been as frank."

The blood leaped to his face, as if she had struck him. "Wh—what do you mean?"

"I don't think the frankness should all be on one side, do you?"

"Why—I haven't anything much to be ashamed of—I've been pretty decent compared with a good many fellows I know."

"And compared with Paula?"

"Paula?" He looked at her to see if she were in earnest, and finding that she was, he blushed again. "Compared with Paula— Why— I— Well— I—" His widening eyes expressed his astonishment at finding himself relegated from his judicial position to the ignominious role of prisoner at the bar, but Pollyanna knew her fight was won.

"Yes, I think it is well not to have all the confessions on one side," she said, as casually as if she had been discussing furniture. "Let each one own up, and each one forgive, and start fair. And I believe this, that with a girl as beautiful as Paula, it's just as well that she should have learned early in life what base things sometimes pass current as love."

Apparently neither of them had any more to say. But young Woodward wrung her hand till it hurt, and went away, his boyish face thoughtful, but no longer that of a judge about to pass sentence.

CHAPTER XXIV

"FAITHFUL ARE THE WOUNDS OF A FRIEND"

POLLYANNA was puzzled. In a week's time Franklin Lindsay was again to visit the Baltimore specialist, and the indications were that he would soon be able to resume his work, as well as the pleasures which the trouble with his eyes had summarily interrupted. Meanwhile he was passing his enforced leisure most agreeably. For years he had hungered for a word with the woman he loved, and now each day she spent hours in his company, and made no secret of the fact that to be with him again was heaven.

With the prospect of a speedy termination of his black month, and in the interval, alleviations on which he set so high a value, the natural supposition was that Lindsay would be in the best of spirits. Instead he was unmistakably depressed. When Pollyanna took charge of him after Lorraine's departure for the day, she found it uphill work. He answered her questions, laughed when she related some funny speech of

one of the children, or described Jiggs' latest escapade, listened politely when she read to him, thanked her scrupulously for every service, yet somehow gave her the impression that she was being held at arm's length.

"Do you suppose it's because he's worrying over seeing the doctor," Pollyanna asked Jimmy, on one of those innumerable occasions when they discussed their friend's disappointing gloom. "Of course nobody knows what the verdict will be. There's a chance that this month is only a forerunner of worse things. He didn't seem a bit apprehensive at first, but perhaps as the time comes nearer, it's not so easy to be brave."

Jimmy agreed that this was probable. "I suppose it's natural just at this point to think of the one chance, instead of the ninety-nine. And anyway, living in the dark for a month gets on a fellow's nerves. I don't wonder Frank's not himself."

From a logical standpoint this was perfectly satisfactory. Pollyanna tried to persuade herself that the diagnosis was correct. For all his courage, Frank was apprehensive as the day approached for testing the result of the operation. No one could ignore that one sinister chance,

were his nerves of steel. Yet even while Pollyanna assured herself that this explanation was sufficient, some instinct, stronger than reason, plagued her with the certainty that they had not found the key to Frank's dejected mood.

It was Lorraine who confirmed that unreasonable conviction. Pollyanna had an odd impression that while Lorraine spent hours under her roof each day, while they exchanged greetings and goodbyes, and passed comments on the weather, and other superficial topics of conversation, she had not really seen Lorraine since her dramatic announcement that Lindsay and herself had once been lovers. They had never referred to that thrilling occasion, but Pollyanna had soon realized that her first assumption that now all misunderstanding was at an end, had been unduly optimistic. She sometimes thought that a smiling mask hid Lorraine's face from her, that her words were cloaked, concealing their real meaning. And as Pollyanna was a downright and outspoken person, she found this trying.

After days of perplexity, she suddenly took the bit in her teeth. How foolish it was for the two of them, constantly thinking of Lindsay as they were, solicitous for his present comfort,

anxious as to his future, to discuss the weather or the latest sensational headlines on the front page of the newspaper. When next Lorraine emerged from the living-room with that strange far-off look of hers, that made her seem as out of reach as an inhabitant of Mars, Pollyanna touched her arm, and indicated by a gesture that she was to follow her into the den. She shut the door as Lindsay's ears were keen, and asked bluntly, "What's the matter with Frank?"

"The matter with Frank?" Lorraine repeated. "Just what do you mean?"

Pollyanna realized that on the face of it, her question was stupid. Lindsay's affliction was no secret so that Lorraine's air of perplexity was justified. She explained, "I mean what's the reason for his being so blue? I think he's getting worse instead of better, don't you?"

"I think that's very natural. In a few days he is to know whether he is to be blind for life or not. The interval is naturally trying."

Pollyanna reminded herself that Lorraine did not know the excellence of Frank's chances for recovery. Yet even with that reminder, she did not feel satisfied. The girl was hiding something, she was sure. "Perhaps he is thinking

more of what will happen after he gets back from Baltimore," she suggested.

"He knows that."

"Oh, he does, does he?" Pollyanna exclaimed, rather aggressively. She did not say that she would be glad to share the young man's certainty, but apparently Lorraine recognized this as her due, for she immediately gave the desired information.

"If he is to be blind, I shall marry him. In that case, this will make no difference." She put her finger to her scarred cheek, facing Pollyanna with a look of exaltation. "I shall marry him and devote my life to making him happy."

Pollyanna did not receive this announcement with enthusiasm. "You're going to marry him if he's blind," she exclaimed. "But what if he comes out of this all right."

Lorraine's uplifted look was replaced by one of sadness. Her arm dropped to her side. "Oh, if he recovers," she said, "then of course we must go back to the old footing. It's the only thing to do. The situation hasn't changed at all."

"Do you mean after seeing him every day for weeks, after letting him make love to you—" Pollyanna was drawing a bow at a venture, but Lorraine's blush told her that she had hit the

mark— "after all this you'll consider drawing out of his life again, going on as if you were strangers?"

"It's the only thing to do, Pollyanna, and it won't be any easier for me than for him. If he recovers, he'll have his work and his friends and a thousand interests. If he is blind he will have —me."

"You don't mean you told him this?"

"Yes, certainly." Something in Pollyanna's manner made Lorraine regard her uneasily. "I wanted him to know that if the worst happened, there would still be something for him to look forward to."

The originator of the phrase, "Beware the fury of a patient man," was sage as well as poet. Pollyanna's amiability sometimes led people to suppose her deficient in temper. If Lorraine had labored under any such misapprehension, the lightning in Pollyanna's eyes speedily enlightened her.

"I see!" Pollyanna's voice shook. "You don't really want him to recover."

"*I* not want him to recover, Pollyanna? Have you lost your mind?"

"If you do, you show it in the strangest fashion, taking away his incentive to get well."

"Your out of your mind," Lorraine said again, but this time with less conviction. Pollyanna was impressed by the thought that now her vehemence was a form of whistling to keep her courage up.

"You've given him his choice between blindness with you, or sight without you. It's a hard choice for a man desperately in love. These weeks he's gone about with his eyes bandaged have taught him what blindness would be like, but I'm not sure he wouldn't rather take that—the helplessness and all—and you along with it, than have everything else, and lose you."

"You don't seem to realize," said Lorraine at her haughtiest," that the choice isn't left with him."

"And do you mean to say that you don't know that his wish will help to decide the question. Why, it's next to impossible to kill people who just won't die, and just as hard to cure the ones who don't care whether they get well or not. You're taking a terrible responsibility in making him feel that it might be just as well if he never got his sight back."

"I hardly think that needs an answer, Pollyanna. It's a fantastic idea that such a thing could have any effect on the result of an oper-

ation. I know that in a few days he may hear news that will mean the end of all his ambitions. I told him that I would marry him if the doctor's report was unfavorable, because I didn't want him to be crushed by it. I wanted him to feel there was still something to live for."

Lorraine's air of self-approval, superimposed upon the discovery that her worst apprehensions had fallen short of the reality, was too much for Pollyanna's discretion. "Lorraine," she cried, "I wonder if you realize what a selfish woman you are."

Lorraine stared at her. "Selfish? I'm ready to devote the rest of my life to caring for a helpless man, and you call that selfish."

"You're in love with him, and you want him as much as he wants you. There's nothing selfish in that, nor unselfish either. It's just human. The selfish part is this, that rather than have him see you scarred, rather than sacrifice that vanity of yours, you're willing to spoil his life."

"I'm not going to defend myself, Pollyanna. If you can misinterpret so cruelly what I have done, I've no more to say." But Lorraine could not maintain the pose of dignified aloofness. The tears filled her eyes as she faltered, "I've been

coming here every day, trying to make it pleasant for him—"

"If you're going to drop him again like a hot coal, after next week, it would have been better to have left him alone. You don't seem to realize that the man is in love with you. He could stand losing you—people have to stand that sort of thing. But to have you play with him, giving him the privileges of a lover today, and next week shutting your door in his face, is more than flesh and blood can endure."

Lorraine was white with anger. "Apparently everything I've done has been all wrong."

Pollyanna did not contradict her. "It's been wrong because you have the wrong attitude. You think about yourself first, last and all the time. His happiness is incidental."

"I rather think, Pollyanna," said Lorraine breathlessly, "that the sooner we stop the better. You may not realize it—probably you don't—but what you've been saying is past forgiveness." She walked out of the room, her head held high, and Pollyanna stared after her, a prey to conflicting emotions that left her dizzy. That lofty phase of twentieth century morality, which boasts of never interfering in other people's lives, was foreign to her temperament. She

felt as irresistible an impulse to help Lorraine, as if she had seen her drowning before her eyes, and the fact that the drowning girl might be bent on suicide would not have altered her purpose. Her sense of consternation was due to her fear that she had bungled the matter. Pollyanna relieved her overstrained nerves by a fit of crying, with her the rarest of luxuries.

She did not realize the extent of the catastrophe until the next day. As usual after his breakfast Frank groped his way into the living room and seated himself in the easy-chair. Then Pollyanna brought in the morning paper and read him such items of news as she thought would interest him.

This ceremony dispatched, they began to talk of other things, Pollyanna making a desperate effort to be vivacious and entertaining, as she realized that Lindsay was somewhat unresponsive. She had been saving one of Junior's funny speeches to tell him when he seemed unusually depressed, and she concluded that the psychological moment had arrived. But after he had laughed abstractedly, he said with obvious uneasiness, "Isn't she very late this morning?"

Pollyanna looked at the clock and with difficulty suppressed an exclamation of dismay. In

an instant she realized the situation. Lorraine was not coming, and Pollyanna knew who was to blame. "She *is* a little late," she said, trying to speak carelessly. "I'll call her up and hurry her along."

It was Emma who answered her call, and Emma's voice betrayed a sympathy she dared not express in words.

"Miss Lorraine had her breakfast in bed this morning, Mrs. Pendleton. She's not up yet."

"Do you mean she's sick?"

"No'm. She et about the same as usual. She said last night that she wasn't going to get up before time to dress for luncheon."

Pollyanna snapped the receiver back into place, slipped into her coat and ran across the street. Clearly Lorraine was paying her back for her hasty words of the day before, but unluckily it was Frank who must foot the bill. She would have to apologize, of course, but she told herself that she could say she was sorry without stretching the truth. Emma who had just been talking with her over the phone, could hardly believe her eyes when she found her at the door.

"Good gracious, Mrs. Pendleton, did you fly

over? I ain't more than hung up after talking with you."

"Emma, I want to see Miss Lorraine. It's very important. Don't you think," wheedled Pollyanna, "that I could slip up to her room without her knowing beforehand that I was here?"

Emma's horror negatived that proposition as soon as it was made.

"Good land alive, Mrs. Pendleton, I should say *not*. 'Twould be as much as my place was worth."

Pollyanna sighed. "Well, then, tell her I'm here and that I want to speak to her for just a minute, on something very important."

The time of Emma's absence was discouragingly long. Pollyanna tried to make herself believe she was only putting the room to rights in anticipation of her call, but in her heart she knew better. And when at length Emma made her appearance, carrying an envelope between her thumb and finger, Pollyanna was aware at once that the worst had happened.

"Miss Lorraine says will you please excuse her," Emma informed her, with parrotlike exactness, "an' this letter's for you."

The name written in pencil on the envelope,

confirmed her statement. Pollyanna's fingers trembled as she drew out the enclosure. This too, was in pencil, but written very clearly. It was plain that Lorraine's hand had not trembled.

"I have given a good deal of thought to what you said yesterday, and I am inclined to believe you were right. If I am not to see any more of Frank, this revival of our acquaintance has been all wrong. I cannot undo what has been done, but I will be on my guard against any repetition of my mistake.

"LORRAINE."

Pollyanna looked from the letter to the stairs. Apparently Emma read what was in her mind, for she spoke in a whisper.

"She got out of bed, Mrs. Pendleton, just the minute I stepped into the hall, and came over and locked the door, so nothing's no use."

The worst part was telling Frank. Pollyanna took all the blame for what had happened, in no way sparing herself.

"I lost my temper, you see. When she told me that if you became blind she was going to marry you, and otherwise she would never see you again, I just said she was the most selfish woman I had ever known, or something to that effect. Tactful, wasn't it?"

Frank was extraordinarily nice about it. Instead of scolding her as she deserved, he thanked her for her loyalty, and then he went on to say drearily that perhaps it was best that way.

"In all probability by another week I'll being going through the same hell I went through a few years ago, and it's too much. Reminds me of an old fellow who lived down home when I was a boy. He fell out of a boat one day, and nearly drowned, but they pulled him out and brought him around, after working over him for several hours. He seemed to regard it as a grievance. Always said that every man knew he had to die once, but that dying twice was more than should be asked of anybody. And I'm inclined to agree with him."

Pollyanna was not deceived by this pretense of flippancy. "When I do lose my temper," she mourned, "I believe I make a worse muddle of it than anybody else does. You know, Frank," she went on dismally, "that while what I said sounded unkind, I didn't mean it that way. I wouldn't have said it if I hadn't cared so much for both of you."

"'Faithful are the wounds of a friend,'" Frank quoted. He added gently, "Don't make

yourself miserable about it. You've only hastened the inevitable. And the more I've been with her, the harder the break is going to seem when it comes. So I'll try your game and be glad it's ended before it got to be too much for me."

But Pollyanna's answering smile was a gloomy failure. After a life-time of playing the game, she really could not see in the present situation anything to be glad about.

CHAPTER XXV

THE CAREWS HELP OUT

WHATEVER Pollyanna's opinion of Lorraine Chalmers, that young woman's defection left her with an appalling sense of helplessness. She tried desperately to undo the consequences of her hasty words. Breakfast was hardly over, before Kathleen was dispatched across the street, bearing a letter of apology. One who read it carefully might have noticed that it did not retract the writer's emphatically expressed opinion of Lorraine's selfishness, and whether or not Lorraine was impressed by the significant omission, she made no reply.

Pollyanna felt like a besieged garrison, spying a relief column in the distance, when along in the afternoon of the second day the Carews made their appearance. The cordiality of her welcome was intensified by the discovery that they had come in a brand-new car, and everyone knows that as a conversational inspiration, a new car ranks second only to a new baby. In

order not to appear unappreciative, Pollyanna was obliged to slip into her coat, and stand on the curb till she was chilled to the bone, conscientiously approving the car's fine points, as the Carews enumerated them in order. She was glad to see that Lindsay's interest in a new model triumphed for the time being over his dejection. He asked a number of questions, and without the aid of eyesight, learned much more about the car than Pollyanna succeeded in finding out.

In order to get the full benefit of this fortuitous alliance she promptly invited the Carews to dinner, sweeping aside their hesitancy in a way she had, when she wanted something very much. It was not really difficult to change their half-hearted refusal to an acceptance, and, indeed, Nancy did not wait for orders, before putting an extra leaf in the dining-table. In a month of blindness or its equivalent, Lindsay had reached a point of dexterity where he no longer preferred a solitary meal to a social one. The children joyously took charge of little Jamie, and carried him off to the play-room, agreeably excited by the prospects of so many playmates.

It was not till everything that could be said

about a new car had been said at least twice, that Pollyanna launched a fresh topic. "How's your new book getting on, James? Of course there *is* a new one."

"Yes, there is a new one." The popular author shook his head. "And it's come near being the death of me."

"And that's literally true," put in Sadie, as if to forestall the possibility of laughter. "If every book took as much out of him as this one has, he wouldn't live to write many."

Lindsay seemed surprised. "I always knew authorship was an exacting profession, but I never supposed it was as bad as all that."

"Well, this book has been an exception. And I'm sorry to say it's all Pollyanna's fault."

Pollyanna laughed, partly because Lindsay's surprise was really amusing, and partly to show that her feelings were not hurt by this accusation. And unmoved by her laughter, James went on to explain.

"She didn't approve of my recent line. My last book, 'Growing Pains', was pretty well received by the critics and the public—"

"'Growing Pains'? Why, yes, I didn't read it, but I remember it made a hit." Lindsay's

manner showed the characteristic American respect for success, whatever form it may take.

"Well, this young woman set her opinion up against the rest of the world and told me my book was demoralizing. And I'll have to own she had some hard facts on her side. The truth is," James explained, addressing Lindsay, but with an eye on Pollyanna, "some of the critics who profess to speak for the intellectual bunch, won't admit that a book is important unless it is off-color morally. I suppose I got tired of their patronage, and wanted to show them I could do the other sort of thing, if I cared to."

"And now you've shown them," suggested Pollyanna, "you don't care to do it again." She added anxiously, "You say the new book has bothered you, James, but everything's all right now, isn't it?

"Oh, I suppose so. It's hard to estimate anything that you've toiled and sweated over, just as when a thing is spontaneous, you're likely to think it better than it really is."

"Miss Merrill has made things hard for him," remarked Sadie, who if she never actually said, "I told you so", was not averse to letting her friends know that her judgment had proved better than theirs.

"Miss Merrill?" Pollyanna looked from one to the other incredulously. "Why, I thought—"

James anticipated what she was about to say. "A year ago I considered her the best secretary I ever had. But this winter it's been a different story."

"She's been simply impossible," Sadie supplemented. "There was a time when James thought he would really have to discharge her."

James' sense of justice led him to interpose. "Yes, but that was some time ago. She's been doing better lately."

"It was since you started the new book, and I remember your saying—"

"I don't doubt I said a good many things that wouldn't bear repeating. Just before Christmas she drove me almost distracted. She's never been as bad again."

Pollyanna drew a long breath. It was shortly before Christmas that Paula had come to her for help, made desperate by the threats of Gerald Fox. It was not strange that in this crisis she had failed to satisfy her employer. Pollyanna wondered if Lindsay, as well as herself, had put two and two together, but his eyes, which would have told tales, were hidden by the bandage, and the rest of his face was inscrutable.

Polyanna was trying to think of a topic more interesing to Lindsay than the defects of James' secretary, when Judy came downstairs. She sidled into the living room, and stood at her mother's elbow, wearing that air of dreamy contemplation which to those who knew Judy, indicated an uneasy conscience. Engrossed in the entertainment of her guests, Pollyanna did not notice her daughter's presence, and Judy gently pulled her sleeve.

"What is it, dear?" Pollyanna regarded the small girl apprehensively, her misgivings roused by Judy's expression of cherubic innocence.

"Mother, if a little white boy turned into a little black boy, could you turn him back again?"

"Judy, what have you been doing?"

"I didn't do it," Judy cried, "an' Junior didn't neither. But we blacked our shoes with the blacking that comes out of a bottle. We wanted 'em to be nice and shiny, 'cause we've got comp'ny. And then Ruth—"

Pollyanna waited to hear no more. She flew up the stairs, Sadie at her heels. Judy brought up the rear, seemingly in no hurry to observe the practical answer in her speculative inquiry.

In the bathroom a strange piebald object oc-

cupied the white enameled stool. For the most part his countenance was a shining black, though white spots showed at intervals, like some animal, irregularly marked. In his neck a few golden curls contrasted strikingly with the moist ebony of his crown. Little rivulets of liquid blacking had made their way down his clothing, and what was not absorbed by his garments, became inky pools on the tiled floor. Sitting atop the clothes hamper, her countenance betraying an impish delight in her handiwork, was Ruth, smeared and spotted only less than Jamie himself.

Sadie's wail of anguish roused Pollyanna to the need of immediate action.

"Don't be frightened, Sadie. I'm pretty sure it will come off. If it doesn't come off the clothes, it will off Jamie—in time, anyway."

"Oh Pollyanna," groaned Sadie, "His beautiful hair."

The entertainment of Franklin Lindsay, which up to this moment had seemed of paramount importance, faded into insignificance alongside this tragedy. Nancy, called upstairs to take charge of the spotted garments of the two children, stood aghast.

"My goodness, Miss Pollyanna! I hope it

ain't what they call fast colors. If he ain't the living image of a pickaninny!"

Pollyanna was testing the water in the tub. It's not too hot now. Put him right in. And here are the soap and brushes.

Under the systematic ministrations of two pairs of competent hands, Jamie's appearance gradually altered. The vigorous scrubbing and scouring to which he was subjected, along with the effect of hot water, modified his Ethiopic hue. He changed from black to grey, from grey to rose color. Even his scalp showed pink under his dripping hair. Pollyanna was irresistibly reminded of a pink soap baby, which for some time had been Ruth's inseparable companion in her daily ablutions.

"What do you think about his hair?" Sadie demanded for the dozenth time. "Wouldn't it be terrible if his lovely hair was streaked?"

"I think we've got it off," said Pollyanna optimistically. "But if we can't wash it off, Sadie, it's bound to grow off. Think how fast a child's hair grows." She stood up, wiping her own moist forehead. "I believe we'd better call it done. We mustn't rub the skin off."

Sadie agreed that this would be undesirable,

then found new ground for consternation. "Pollyanna, the child hasn't a thing to put on."

"I'll get some of Ruth's clothes. They'll be too big for him, of course, but not much. He's larger for his age than she was."

Throughout the trying afternoon, Jamie had kept his poise. He had giggled over Ruth's experiment with the shoe-polish. When two earnest women had undertaken to remove the same polish, he had grinned forgivingly. Too strenuous applications of the nailbrush, or soap in his eyes, had elicited only a philosophic grunt. But when he realized that he, a male being, recently promoted to the dignity of trousers, was expected to don the garments of a girl, he lifted up his voice in lamentation. He screamed and struggled. He kicked as if training for some football fracas in the years ahead.

"What has got into the child?" Sadie asked, less of Pollyanna than of high heaven. "I never knew him to behave like this."

"His masculine dignity is affronted, that is all," Pollyanna unrelentingly buttoned the little pink frock, and set the shrieking wearer on his feet. "Junior," she called.

Junior came with ingratiating haste, well aware that his mother would hold him partly

responsible for letting the younger children get into such serious mischief.

"Take Jamie into the play-room and amuse him till dinner is ready," said Pollyanna. "Don't let him out of your sight."

"No, I won't mother," Junior promised. And as he led his visitor away, Jamie's howls were magically modified, changing into muffled sobs, and then, into husky laughter. And Pollyanna and Sadie, hot and tired as they were laughed as they listened.

It was a very cheerful dinner, though a trifle late. Junior and Judy were almost painfully on their good behavior. Ruth was old enough to realize that she had been a naughty girl, and was trying to make amends by being extremely affectionate to everyone. Jamie went to sleep in the high chair, and nodded there peacefully. Even Sadie had reached the point where she could see the humor of the situation, and smile reminiscently over her soup. The men had thought it funny all the time, and Pollyanna regarded the incident philosophically, since it had actually moved Lindsay to laughter.

"Of course I'm not glad it happened," she explained to Jimmy later. "But as long as

something had to happen, I'm glad it was funny. It seemed nice to hear Frank laughing again."

The Carews left early, Jamie sleeping peacefully in his father's arms, while Sadie drove the car. As Lindsay seemed inclined to talk, Jimmy and Pollyanna sat up later than they were accustomed to. It was just midnight when Pollyanna turned out the lights, preparatory to jumping into bed, and then she snapped them on again in a hurry, for the telephone bell was ringing.

The Pendleton telephone kept good hours, like the rest of the household, and Pollyanna went to answer the summons with that sense of foreboding which is humanity's inevitable response to the unusual. But the voice which spoke her name was reassuringly matter-of-fact, and her apprehension was at once changed to curiosity.

"Why, James Carew, couldn't you get talked out in an afternoon and evening?"

"Didn't wake you up, did I?"

"Do I sound as sleepy as all that? No you didn't wake me."

"I have a piece of news I thought would interest you, Pollyanna. I'm going to lose my secretary."

Pollyanna caught her breath. "Why?" The monosyllable snapped over the wire like the crack of a pistol, and James smiled at her intensity, little guessing her reason for being interested.

"Miss Merrill left a note on my desk with the copy, asking me to find another secretary as soon as the book is finished. She's going to be married."

"Married? Did she tell you his name?"

James chuckled, and Pollyanna knew he found her childish curiosity amusing. It was as well he could not know how breathlessly she awaited his answer.

"Left the note downstairs, and don't remember the name. Let's see. I believe it was Woodhouse or Woodhead—well, Wood, something or other."

"Lloyd Woodward."

"That's the name. Why, do you know the fellow?"

"Just slightly, but enough to know he's a nice boy."

"It's going to be an awful nuisance making another change," said James lugubriously." I appreciate her waiting till the book is out of the way. If she left me in the lurch now, it

would be the last straw. It will be bad enough next fall."

"I thought her work was so unsatisfactory."

James hesitated. "Well, this winter it hasn't been altogether satisfactory, but at her worst, she is better than some that might fall to my lot. At least she's intelligent."

"Good heavens!" said Jimmy's voice from the bedroom. "If you're going to stand at the phone all night, do put on your slippers."

Left to herself Pollyanna might have continued the conversation indefinitely, but Jimmy's suggestion brought to her mind the realization that her feet were cold, and that she had just suppressed a sneeze. "I mustn't talk any more," she said regretfully. "Good night, James, and thank you for calling. If you are not open to congratulations, I believe Paula is."

In spite of the vicissitudes of the day, Pollyanna went to bed happy. Paula's acceptance of her counsel had not shattered her hopes, and the success of that matrimonial venture would not be imperiled by a secret which any day might explode like a bomb. Under the circumstances, Pollyanna felt she had a right to be complacent. "I'm glad I helped Paula," she thought, "even if I failed with Lorraine."

CHAPTER XXVI

QUITS

THE Friday after the Carew's visit was one of those winter days possessing the elusive charm of spring without its languors. The sky was blue and cloudless, the air mild, except for a racy undercurrent in the breeze that prevented one's winter clothing from seeming burdensome. Instinctively one listened for the call of migrating birds. It was impossible to realize that in a week it might be snowing furiously, or that the thermometer was quite capable of dropping forty or fifty degrees to the mid-winter level. Pollyanna was disappointed that on a morning capable of injecting gaiety into the most withered octogenarian, to say nothing of raising the spirits of a constitutional pessimist, Lindsay should have come downstairs in the depths of depression. His face betrayed it. His voice corroborated that mute testimony. His scant interest in his breakfast was additional proof of low spirits. As Jimmy

and Pollyanna chatted over the morning meal, they exchanged significant glances. The most obvious explanation of their friend's mood was his dread of the surgeon's verdict, a dread that might be unreasonable but certainly was not unnatural. Jimmy had made arrangements to take him to Baltimore on the night train Saturday, returning in time for work Monday morning. As far as Lindsay's return journey was concerned, there was every reason to hope that he would be able to make it without an escort.

"It's natural for him to be glum when it comes right up to the scratch," Jimmy said to Pollyanna, in a confidential mumble as she accompanied him to the door. "Do your best for the boy, but don't worry."

A little later in the morning, after Pollyanna had made some excessively cheerful prophesy as to the result of his prospective trip, Lindsay revealed that the root of his depression went deeper than she had thought. "It's not that, Pollyanna," he explained abruptly. "I don't doubt I shall be as well as ever in a week. The question that is bothering me is whether after I get my sight back, it's going to be worth while to carry on."

"Franklin Lindsay, I'm ashamed of you."

"I'm ashamed of myself, not so much for feeling that way, as for bothering you with it. But the truth is, Pollyanna, things stretch ahead at such a dull, dreary level that I hate the thought of going on."

"But, Frank, it's unreasonable to feel that way. You're got so much to be thankful for, youth, and good looks, and health and money and friends and a profession you enjoy and—"

"Everything but the one thing that matters, Pollyanna. I don't say that love is reasonable. Indeed I believe the authorities are pretty well agreed that it isn't. I never flattered myself that I was getting over caring for Lorraine. The men and women of our family don't get over those things. There's a constant streak in us, worse luck. And after being so close to her for this little time, it's doubly hard to lose her again."

"Yes, I know." In spite of her apologetic letter to Lorraine, Pollyanna felt certain that if that young woman stood before her at that moment, she would utter blasting truths compared with which her recent denunciations would seem the suavest of compliments.

The conversation did not long continue at

this gloomy level. Pollyanna guessed that Lindsay, regretting these disclosures of his morbid mood, made an effort to talk normally, though personally she found his pretense of gaiety harder to bear than outspoken dejection. Her laughter rang false in her own ears, her vivacity was deliberate, not spontaneous. It was extraordinary, she thought, how one self-willed girl could upset everybody.

After luncheon she suggested a walk, but Frank begged off. He had really been very good about taking his constitutional, and this refusal added to Pollyanna's certainty that his mood was abnormal.

"I don't feel like making a show of myself today, Pollyanna, and my health won't suffer if I miss one walk. After next week, if all goes well, I can get my exercise without needing to be led around by a dog on a string."

"But the air is perfect today, Frank. It feels so like spring that it's all I can do to keep from starting to clean house. It's really a shame to shut yourself away from all this sunshine."

"Go on and enjoy it, but leave me out. I'm convinced that neither sunshine nor springtime are all they're cracked up to be."

"I'll have to go. I must get Ruth new shoes

and do some other errands. But I hate to leave you home alone. And it's so much more fun," coaxed Pollyanna, "to have somebody along to talk to when you're out for a walk."

"Talk to Jiggs, then. I'm sure he'll make a far more entertaining companion than I'm capable of being today."

In the end, since neither would give up, they decided on a compromise. Frank agreed to put on his hat and overcoat, and sit on the porch in the sun, while Pollyanna did her shopping. But even after he was ensconed in the weather-beaten porch-rocker which was left outside through the winter, she turned as she went down the steps to ask, "Now doesn't this delicious air make you feel like taking a stroll?"

Lindsay laughed. "Persistency, thy name is Pollyanna. Thank you, but I feel quite well satisfied where I am."

When a woman goes out to make a few trivial purchases, it generally takes her longer than she had expected. Buying a piano or even a house may consume less time than matching a spool of silk. It was one of the occasions when the merchants of the suburb showed a singular unanimity in being unable to give Pollyanna just what she wanted.

When the clock in the jeweler's window informed her that it was time for Junior and Judy to be coming from school, her indefatigable conscience made her uncomfortable. "How long I've left poor Frank, and on a day when he's feeling particularly blue. I must go straight home." And she carried out that resolution as far as was compatible with the plan of a very modern suburb, where winding streets were preferred to mathematical right angles.

Lindsay was not on the porch when she reached home, and Pollyanna was not surprised. Sitting in the sun for an hour and a half would hardly appeal to an active temperament. She entered the house, peered into the living-room, and not finding what she sought, went into the kitchen to interview Nancy. "Did Mr. Lindsay go up to his room?"

"I don't know, Miss Pollyanna. I haven't heard a sound out of him since you left."

Pollyanna went upstairs. The door of Lindsay's room was wide open and she saw at a glance that the room was unoccupied. Without removing her coat, she began to look for him, and in a very short time had assured herself that he was not in the house. It was Kath-

leen's afternoon out, so she could not be quizzed, and Nancy continued to reiterate her ignorance of Lindsay's movements, since Pollyanna herself had escorted him to the porch.

Under these circumstances it was inevitable that Pollyanna's thoughts should turn to Lorraine. Was it possible that seeing Lindsay apparently deserted, she had crossed the street and taken him in charge? Or had he, instead of submitting to the decree which again exiled him from her life, groped his way to her door to plead his cause? Considering Lorraine's attitude since their quarrel, Pollyanna thought the first alternative unlikely, but the second seemed even more improbable. And yet as far as she could see it was a choice of impossibilities. There was no plausible explanation for what had happened, but the fact remained that Lindsay had disappeared. And plausible or not, some explanation was the correct one.

She went to the telephone and gave Lorraine's number. The friendly Emma answering the call, informed her that Miss Lorraine was off in the car.

"Did she go alone?"

Evidently Emma found the question surprising. "Why, yes, Mrs. Pendleton, she ain't never

been to drive with nobody since we lived here, except just you."

Even then Pollyanna was not satisfied. "When did she leave, Emma?"

"About one o'clock, Mrs. Pendleton. She had an early luncheon, because she wanted to get out before there'd be so many cars on the road. She'd ought to be home any time now. She said she wouldn't be gone long."

"The moment she comes in, Emma, tell her to call me. Ask her not to wait." She thought it as well that Lorraine should share her growing anxiety. The possibility that the girl had so far relaxed her uncompromising attitude as to kidnap Lindsay and carry him off was vetoed by the time she had left home, a good half hour before Lindsay had crept out into the spring-like sunshine.

The situation seemed to Pollyanna serious enough to justify tolls for a city call. In five minutes she was explaining matters to Jimmy who seemed frankly bewildered.

"Not in the house? But he couldn't have gone anywhere by himself. He doesn't know any of the neighbors except Lorraine, and if she's out of the question—"

"Jimmy, I'm frightened. I don't want to make

any inquiries that will start gossip, but he said something today that wasn't a bit like him. He said that even if his eyes got all right, he wasn't sure that it would pay to carry on."

"Did Frank say that?"

"Yes, Jimmy. I thought it was just an exaggerated way of saying he was heart-sick and discouraged but now—"

"Listen, Dear," Jimmy interrupted. "I'll get the first train home, but don't let yourself worry about that speech of his. Frank gets desperately blue sometimes, but he's too much of a man even to contemplate killing himself."

"Yes, I think so too," Pollyanna agreed, something in her tone partially contradicting the courageous words. "But you'll come home as soon as you can, won't you?"

"I'm leaving the office within two minutes," Jimmy said, and ended the conversation with that promise. Though he had made light of Pollyanna's fears, after the immemorial fashion of husbands, he was more disturbed by what she had told him than he would willingly have admitted. An able-bodied man did not disappear from one's front porch as a drop of dew disappears in the sun.

"He either walked off by himself, or some-

one took him away. He couldn't have done the first without peeling off those bandages, and that would mean he'd gone crazy. But there's nobody who would have taken him off except Lorraine, and Pollyanna says she couldn't have done it."

Jimmy took a taxi to the station, an unwonted extravagance. But he thought it was worth the money when, thanks to its aid, he made a train he would otherwise have missed. He considered it the slowest train that had ever carried him over the familiar route, but any train, even though it crawled at a snail's pace, was better than waiting in the station. He sat braced in his seat, thankful that since this was not the train he usually took, no one knew him well enough to come over and talk to him. What had become of Frank? He was too much of a man to kill himself, if he were rational, but unhappy love affairs had been known to upset the equilibrium of sensitive brains. And the grim fact of his disappearance had to be accounted for.

The sight of his home, cosily bright and matter-of-fact, had the effect of making him feel the extravagance of his uneasiness. It was impossible to associate mystery with its white-curtained windows and the thought of tragedy

seemed even more remote. Jimmy felt sure that once across the threshold, he would find Pollyanna and Frank laughing over the simplicity of the mysterious disappearance, that had puzzled them all. But when his latch-key turned in the door, it was a pale and disquieted Pollyanna who ran to meet him.

"Haven't you heard from him yet, dear?"

"No. Oh, what can it mean, Jimmy? I've asked several neighbors if they saw him. Some of them noticed him sitting on the porch, but no one saw him go."

"You're certain Lorraine couldn't have carried him off?"

"I've been there since I telephoned you, talking things over with Emma. Lorraine left a good half hour before I brought Frank out on the porch. And besides, Emma stood at the window, and watched her drive off. She says positively there wasn't anyone in the car with Lorraine, except the chauffeur."

Jimmy sat down in the hall without removing his overcoat, scowling with the effort of thinking. "If any friend came along and picked him up, you'd think he'd have left word with Nancy. Or if he didn't suppose that necessary, certainly

by this time he should have the sense to telephone. He must know that we're worrying."

"If we only knew the right thing to do," said Pollyanna, a catch in her voice. "Ought we to notify the police? I'm so afraid the idea will get around that his mind is unbalanced, and he'll have that to live down."

"I think we'll give him till six o'clock," said Jimmy. "That's our dinner hour, and if nothing has happened to him, he ought certainly to let us know his whereabouts by that time. If we don't hear from him, we'll go ahead and do the thing that seems wisest, and if he doesn't like it, he'll have himself to blame. Whew!" said Jimmy, rising and peeling off his overcoat. "Sherlock Holmes is welcome to his job. This little affair has convinced me that nature didn't design me for a sleuth."

The next hour passed slowly. Jimmy talked and joked and tried to distract Pollyanna's thoughts from her anxiety, and Pollyanna played up gallantly. But even while she smiled, her eyes were darkened by brooding tragedy. Could it be that she had failed so utterly that Frank had gone from her home to take his life?

At two minutes to six the doorbell rang and Pollyanna sprang to her feet. Her swift move-

ment toward the door was checked as abruptly as if a hand had seized her and jerked her back. "You go," she whispered to Jimmy. "I—I can't."

There was a young woman at the door. She lifted her face and looked straight at Jimmy, and he recognized her instantly by the bad scar on her left cheek.

"This is Mr. Pendleton, isn't it? I'm your neighbor, Lorraine Chalmers. I'd like to speak to Pollyanna."

Jimmy's eyes went past her to the car standing at the curb. The back seat was occupied, and it was light enough for him to recognize the dim figure, leaning against the upholstery. "I'll call her," he said, nobly mastering an impulse to seize these two irritating lovers, and shake them till they begged for mercy. "Won't you come in?"

"No, thank you. It's rather late," said Lorraine. Nothing in her manner up to this point indicated a realization that she had done anything unusual, but when Pollyanna came scurrying to the door, her air of assurance fell from her. "Pollyanna! Oh, you've been anxious."

"Is Frank with you? Oh, Lorraine! Of course I was anxious. He couldn't walk a block

by himself, and to have him disappear bodily was rather startling. And Emma assured me you were alone."

"I was at first. I drove for about an hour, and then as I was coming home, I saw him sitting on the porch. Pollyanna, he looked so lonely and unhappy that I just couldn't bear it. I got out of the car, and asked him to come for a short drive. If I'd known we were to be gone so long, I'd have left word."

Pollyanna was already beginning to discount her late terrors, and this was rendered easier by the discovery that an extraordinary change had come over Lorraine. "I suppose all's well that ends well," she declared blithely. "Lorraine, why don't you stay to dinner. Please do. It's just ready. As long as I didn't have anything to do with the cooking, it's probably good."

"No thank you, Pollyanna." Lorraine's negative, while decided, showed none of the horrified recoil which had always been her reaction to such a suggestion. "I think we won't come tonight."

"Do you mean that you're going to take Frank home with you to dinner? That's fine." Pollyanna's face glowed, for this indeed, was progress. "When he's ready to come home," she

continued, "if you'll call up, Jimmy will run over and get him."

"I—I think Frank won't be back tonight."

Pollyanna turned and looked at her. A beautiful color suffused Lorraine's face, but the eyes that met Pollyanna's did not waver. And the serious smile that seemed to reveal another woman from the one Pollyanna had known, only deepened in the palpitating silence.

"Pollyanna," Lorraine began quickly. "Do you remember telling me that some day I might come to be glad of this scarred cheek of mine, that it might be worth while to undergo what I have, just to find out how little such things matter?"

She was waiting for an answer, and Pollyanna faltered, "Why, yes, I remember."

"Well, dear, the time has come. I'm the happiest woman in the world I believe, and it's all your doing."

Pollyanna's brain was working rather slowly, perhaps as a result of the extra pressure put upon it earlier in the day. But by now she was confronted by the inevitable conclusion. "Lorrain, you can't mean—why, you *must* mean—"

Lorraine's arms went around her. "Yes, Pollyanna. We were married this afternoon.

I'm going down to Baltimore with Frank tomorrow," she continued, "but whatever the outcome of that visit, whatever the verdict, I'm the happiest woman alive, for no woman was ever loved more truly."

Pollyanna kissed her violently, then broke from her clinging arms and ran down the steps to the waiting car. "Frank Lindsay," she shouted to the smiling bridegroom, "if I'd gone to your wedding—and I had every reason to expect an invitation—I should certainly have kissed you. And you're not going to get out of it because you sneaked off and got married behind my back."

She was caught and kissed before she could finish. "Pollyanna," the young man said breathlessly. "You've been our good angel. Lorraine and I have said a dozen times this afternoon, that we owe our happiness to you, and neither of us will live long enough to forget it."

The Pendleton's dinner was delayed, while Pollyanna imparted the great news to Jimmy, with a mixture of laughter and tears, so out of character as to make him distinctly uneasy. "Well, I'm glad they're married," he said, rather sulkily, at length. "Now they'll have to look out for themselves, and give you a rest."

"Yes, they won't need me any more," beamed Pollyanna, her smile, rainbow-like, glowing through her tears. "And I've paid my debt, Jimmy. Lorraine kept our hearts from breaking by saving the life of our darling little daughter. I've kept her heart from breaking by giving her the man she loves. We're quits."

THE END

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